

**EXPRESSIONS ET ARTS**

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**WOMEN IN ACTION, COUNCILS IN CHANGE:  
THE PRODUCTIVITY OF WOMEN'S SPEECH STYLES  
IN MADAGASCAR'S RANOMAFANA  
NATIONAL PARK**

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**Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

In speech communities throughout Madagascar, men and women are understood to possess their own unique speech styles<sup>2</sup>. Nowhere do the differences in these styles make a more dramatic appearance than in oratorical discourse, or *kabary*. Two of the more important roles women hold in *kabary* performances involve the reparation of breakdown in men's oratorical exchanges and the confrontation of anti-social actions. Although analyses exist of the emergence of these roles from specific sociohistorical contexts, the productivity of women's discourse styles - that is, how women's speech practice in turn shapes the institutions from which it emerges and provides grounds for the development of novel gender identities - remains relatively unexplored. In an attempt to fill this gap, the present article centers upon the *kabary* performances constituting a particular village council (*fokonolona*) meeting in the southeast of the island. The speech practice of one woman is foregrounded as mediating a set of complex struggles over land and labor now occurring at the border of one of Madagascar's largest national parks.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this article, I follow Dell Hymes in defining speech style as "any and all organization of linguistic features, of verbal means, in relation to a social context" (1974:59).

## Ambodiaviavy and the Ranomafana National Park

The town of Ranomafana is located some 140 kilometers west of the coastal city of Mananjary in Madagascar's southeastern province of Fianarantsoa. For eighteen months, I lived and worked in Ambodiaviavy, a residential community (*tanàna*<sup>1</sup>) nestled in the Ranomafana-Ifanadiana region rainforest. Most of the two hundred and forty residents of Ambodiaviavy refer to themselves as Tanala, or 'People of the Forest'<sup>2</sup> At a more practical level, community members work with at least four patrilineal clan (*karazana*) identifications. Among the four lines, it is the Sambinoro who are recognized as the 'masters of the land' (*tompon-tany*) in Ambodiaviavy.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, however, the Sambinoro's claim to be the true masters of their estate has suffered a serious challenge. On May 27, 1991 the Democratic

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Philip Thomas for suggesting the term 'residential community' as a translation of the Malagasy word *tanàna*. Thomas correctly points out that the notion of *tanàna* cannot be properly understood without attention to the material life in and through which the community experiences its own existence. Throughout the present article, I avoid the term 'village'. As Stacy Pigg points out, within many national and international development discourses the category of village tends to dissolve regional difference and clear a space for an "ersatz sociocultural knowledge" (1992 : 504). This knowledge links a generic village inhabited by generic villagers all functioning with a generic consciousness to "national political institutions, international development, and representations of the third world in the West" (*ibid* : 511). I employ the term used by the Tanala people among whom I lived and worked: *tanàna*.

<sup>2</sup> The term *foko* has been variously interpreted by European observers of Madagascar as tribe, peoples, races, and, most recently, ethnicity. A majority of the people of Ambodiaviavy define themselves as belonging to the Tanala (or, People of the Forest) *foko*, although Ambodiaviavy residents are relatively recent immigrants from a region typically associated with the Betsileo peoples. Following the labeling and identification practices of Ranomafana region residents, I will refer to those peoples living on the southeastern borders of the Ranomafana National Park (the Park encloses much of rainforest around Ambodiaviavy) as Tanala, specifying any other *foko* identifications when necessary. In using the term Tanala in this way, I am building on recent discussions of identity in Madagascar that emphasize the performative and geo-determinist nature of such large-scale identifications as Tanala (see Astuti, 1995, Hanson forthcoming). The term Tanala, as I was continually told by Ranomafana residents, refers to a mode of life in the forest. This identity is opposed to identification based on descent. The term *karazana* (kind) is used for this latter. For discussions of 'identity' in Madagascar see Astuti (1995), Domenichini (1989), Feeley-Harnik (1984), Lambek & Walsh (1997) and Lambek (1996).

<sup>3</sup> For historical accounts of migrations into the Ranomafana region see Andriamiarisoa (1986), Du Picq (1905), Gaudebout & Molet (1957), Solondraibe (1986).

Republic of Madagascar issued decree #91-250, officially establishing the Ranomafana National Park (RNP)<sup>1</sup> Today, Ambodiaviavy is located just a short distance from the Park's southeastern border. Ranomafana Park planners justify their enclosure of approximately 175 square miles of land by arguing that the rich store of genetic diversity at home in the Ranomafana region is threatened with destruction by the activity of area farmers. Ambodiaviavy residents, on the other hand, claim that the 40 square miles of Sambinoro ancestral land (*tanin-drazana*) now "lost" (*very*) to the Park formed an important part of their ability to reproduce themselves as Sambinoro Tanala.

On May 31, 1991, Malagasy communities from the Ranomafana region, representatives of the Malagasy government, planners from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)<sup>2</sup> and researchers associated with a score of American universities gathered in Ranomafana to inaugurate the Ranomafana National Park Project (RNPP; note the difference from RNP) (RNPP Newsletter, 1992, Wright, 1992 : 31-32). The 'Park Project' is an integrated conservation/development program (ICDP) whose primary goal is the conservation of the Park's natural resources. ICDPs are generally interventionist in their approach to conservation - the conservation process thus involving the 'development' of those resident human populations who, in attempting to reproduce their communities, threaten the continued existence of the enclosed ecosystem<sup>3</sup>. The developmentalist discourse of the RNPP strategically defines the Tanala practice of *tavy*<sup>4</sup> as "slash-and-burn farming", adding that it is at once a "non-sustainable" means of meeting "basic needs" and the primary threat to the region's resources (Grenfell, 1994 : ii & 20). 'Development' interventions around the Park are then, for the most part, geared toward halting the spread of *tavy* by helping Tanala residents better exploit "the value" (read commodity value) of the

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information on the Ranomafana National Park (RNP) and its managerial program, the Ranomafana National Park Project (RNPP) see Ferraro & Rakotondrajaona (1989), Grenfell (1994), Hanson (1997), Kightlinger (1993), RNPP (1993), and Wright (1990, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> During its first phase of operation, the RNPP received funding from numerous institutions including Duke University, John D. And Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Man in the Biosphere Program, USAID (the largest contributor), and the World Wildlife Fund.

<sup>3</sup> ICDPs are discussed and defined in the following works : Hagan (1994), Schmid (1993), Wells & Brandon (1993), West & Brechin (1991).

<sup>4</sup> For discussions of *tavy* in Eastern Madagascar see Bloch (1991), Fanony (1975), Jarosz (1993), Le Bourdieu (1974), Rabearimanana (1988).

forests to meet those *needs* newly emergent as a result of the loss of their estate.

Ranomafana-Ifanadiana is an embattled place. The struggle over land and labor now characterizing much of the region appears as a complex interplay between two broad issues: how the forests will be defined and therefore conserved, and how the interpretation of the needs of resident Malagasy, the Malagasy state, Park planners, and tourists will guide development. An analysis of a series of events that occurred in Ambodiaviavy in 1994 will focus attention on how these struggles are unfolding on the ground. Particularly clear in the case study which follows are the links between the actual discursive practices of actors in a specific time and place and the handiwork of global forces of capital accumulation.

### Cyclone Geralda

Ambodiaviavy is the name of both a specific *tanàna* and an administrative unit of the Malagasy state known as the *fokontany*. The *fokontany* of Ambodiaviavy encompasses the three *tanàna* of Ambodiaviavy, Matavirano, and Ankevohevo and is situated entirely on Sambinoro land. Approximately 400 people reside within the borders of the *fokontany*. The *fokonolona*, or village council - composed of all the people residing in the three *tanàna*<sup>1</sup> - shares one school building and a village council house (*tranom-pokonolona*). The village council president lives temporarily in the town of Ranomafana (five kilometers distance from Ambodiaviavy), while the council's vice-president stays in Ambodiaviavy.

On February 2, 1994, cyclone Geralda swept through the Ranomafana region. The three days of strong winds and heavy rains

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article, I define the *fokonolona* as a council composed of community members residing within the *fokontany*. Although this usage is admittedly simplistic, it does accord with the fact that since the 1972 revolution and the efforts of Richard Ratsimandrava, both the *fokonolona* and the *fokontany* represent attempts to return the control of 'development' to the local (or 'popular') level while retaining central direction. Thus, under the 1976 Charter of Decentralized Collectivities, over 11,000 *fokontany* were created, the council of each being locally elected. An administrative hierarchy, moving upward from the *fokontany* and including districts, regions, and provinces ensures supervision from above (ultimately from the Ministry of the Interior). The *fokonolona* is, therefore, constantly mediating local versus central administrative control. Maurice Bloch defines the *fokonolona community* in the following terms: "The *fokonolona* is not a kinship group but a local group bound by kinship-like rights and obligations" (1971: 44; emphasis in original). On the *fokonolona* see also Allen (1995), Condominas (1960), Julien (1908), Randrianahinoro (1991), Serre-Ratsimandisa (1978).

associated with the cyclone wreaked a good deal of destruction throughout the area. In the *fokontany* of Ambodiaviavy, houses were damaged, wet-rice fields were flooded, and the *fokonolona* school building was destroyed. Shortly after the cyclone, a cyclone damage assessment team composed of RNPP employees arrived in Ambodiaviavy and spoke to the vice-president of the *fokonolona*. After being informed of all the damages to the *fokontany*, the assessment team asked what the three *tanàna* most "needed" (*mila*) in the way of cyclone relief. The *fokonolona* vice-president responded with a list of materials required to repair the school building. On October 24, 1994, almost nine months later, the RNPP responded to each of the vice-president's need requests, furnishing the *fokonolona* with twenty-one metal roofing sheets, three sacks of cement, two kilos of nails, four door hinges, and eight doors and window locks.

The RNPP cyclone assistance effort was a rare moment in the history of RNPP integrated conservation/development planning. A very specific set of claims regarding need was presented to RNPP representatives by the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* and the interpretation of the needs by the Park Project (beside the nine month delay in their satisfaction) followed the claims to the letter. The present analysis is concerned with the events which unfolded once the needed materials arrived in the *tanàna*. According to most *fokonolona* members, shortly after the appearance of the supplies, Koto, the non-Sambinoro vice-president of the *fokonolona*, and Samuël, a school teacher tied to the Sambinoro line through marriage and assigned by the Malagasy state to the *fokontany*, began selling the new metal roofing sheets and concealing the whereabouts of the money. The two officials were also accused of initiating repairs on the school building without notifying either the *fokonolona* or *fokontany* work groups<sup>1</sup>. The latter accusation was quite serious in that such an action would be in direct violation of unwritten *fokonolona* law (*didy*). On November 28, 1994, *fokonolona* members called a meeting to confront the two

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<sup>1</sup> Four cooperative work groups appear at different times of the year in the *fokontany* of Ambodiaviavy. The *fikambanana fianakaviana* (kinship cooperative) forms agricultural parties, investment and development teams, and nodal points for the dissemination of information from the government. The second and most commonly appearing cooperative is the *fikambanam-pokonolona* (village council cooperative) which handles projects the village council has had some part in planning and which involves cash payment. The *fikambanam-pokontany* (local administrative unit cooperative) involves the same members as the village council group but works with no cash payment and is primarily responsible for carrying out directives issued by the Malagasy state (ex: the creation and maintenance of pathways between *tanàna*, reforestation efforts, etc.). Finally, the *fikambanam-behivavy* (women's cooperative) is a strictly *tanàna*-level organization and was established soon after the appearance of the RNPP.

officials with their deeds.

### **The *Fokonolona* Defined**

An important feature of the 1994 events in Ambodiaviavy is the fact that the RNPP cyclone assistance team worked with the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* rather than dealing with one or all of the chiefs (*mpanjaka*) of the four descent groups residing in the area. Work with the *fokonolona* has, in fact, characterized most of the RNPP's interventions in Ambodiaviavy. Thus, before moving to an analysis of the actual meeting, it is necessary to briefly define the *fokonolona*, sketch its historical development, and describe its character in the Ranomafana region.

An insightful study of the Malagasy *fokonolona* is that of Maurice Bloch (1971). Although Bloch examines the *fokonolona* as it appears in highland Merina society, those of his observations discussed below are directly applicable to the populations of Ranomafana. Bloch first defines the *fokonolona* as a territorial division of a descent group. Throughout Madagascar, the territory of a descent group is inextricably bound to the identity of the group's members due to the fact that the group's dead ascendants are buried in the land. Therefore, most individuals who live on the descent group's ancestral land and who draw sustenance from this land (regardless of whether they are descended from the group's ancestors or not) are, in one way or another, tied into the *fokonolona* through an ideology of kinship.

Bloch goes on to argue that the *fokonolona* rests uneasily upon two tensions. The first of these tensions arises from the fact that the entire institution is informed by the principles of Malagasy kinship which are themselves highly contradictory. Merina kinship, Bloch writes elsewhere, is characterized "by its mixture of two principles which are both quite elaborately developed in spite of being totally contradictory: hierarchy and equality. Every affirmation of one is countered by an affirmation of the other in the very same area" (1989: 144). Throughout Malagasy society, it is the ancestors (*razana*) who hold authority in relation to the living. Therefore, all living members of a descent group share a sense of equality due to the fact that they are living (*olombelona*) and are offspring of the group's ancestors. Some individuals, however, are closer to being ancestors than others. The former category is composed of elders and elders with outstanding skills (*raiamandreny*). This temporal principle of hierarchy informs much of Malagasy social life, from parent-child and elder-younger sibling relations to ceremonial and informal greetings. Bloch believes that at the relatively small scale level of the *fokontany*, the contradictory principles of hierarchy and equality informing the *fokonolona* are easily balanced by "keeping the

contexts where the two notions occur strictly segregated" (1989 : 140). This is an important argument to which I will return shortly. Here, however, it is important to point out that historical developments have expanded the territorial basis of the *fokonolona*, thereby rendering the balance of its operating principles precarious.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the *fokonolona* had become one of the central points of articulation between a growing Malagasy state and the rural populace. King Andrianampoinimerina, who had been slowly expanding his kingdom across the high plateau of Madagascar, conquered the city of Antananarivo (the present capital of Madagascar) in 1796, unifying the province of Imerina. The continuing success of Andrianampoinimerina's reign rested, to a large extent, upon his ability to bring rural communities within the ambit of his administration. The king accomplished this task by displacing the grounds of local *fokonolona* authority: Andrianampoinimerina substituted the territory of the Malagasy state for the territory of local *fokonolona*, thereby placing himself as the living leader of a large imagined *foko*<sup>1</sup>.

Because changes in the structure and functioning of the *fokonolona* remained relatively limited, the "constitutional change" (Bloch 1971 :35) that Andrianampoinimerina effected in the roots of its authority faced little serious challenge. However, with successive Malagasy rulers, French colonization, and Malagasy independence, the tasks and extraction (forced labor, public works, taxes, fines, etc.) forced upon the *fokonolona* increased while goods and services issuing from the state dried-up. The grounds for the second contradictory tension characterizing today's *fokonolona* now emerged. Maureen Covell summarizes this tension when she argues that by the end of the nineteenth century, Madagascar's *fokonolona* "were both the means through which central governments attempted to control the behavior of the population, and a means by which the population attempted to withdraw from contact with central authority and assert its own version of Malagasy rule, or local autonomy" (Covell, 1987 : 15-16).

Covell's argument here resembles Bloch's ideas concerning the management of contradictions between hierarchy and equality in Malagasy kinship. In fact, both authors propose that within the *fokonolona*, the tensions between local and state authority are worked-out via the segregation of contexts in which the contradictory forces appear. Thus, Covell argues that the institution of the *fokonolona* is used to "withdraw" from "contact" with government authority, while Bloch stresses the fact that *fokonolona* meetings are differentiated into

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<sup>1</sup> I am here using the Merina monarchy's early understanding of the term *foko* as "a small group whose unifying tendency is reinforced by the genealogical proximity of the ancestors of those people who compose it" (Domenichini 1989:20).



those designed to deal with the business of the state and those that handle local matters (Bloch, 1971 : 45-47).

My observations of the *fokonolona* in Ambodiaviavy are somewhat different than those of Bloch and Covell. Most importantly, I did not encounter a difference in types of *fokonolona* meeting<sup>1</sup>. In every meeting, Ambodiaviavy residents appeared to be using the *fokonolona* to reach goals they had themselves defined. In the case of Ambodiaviavy, then, a dialectical approach that considers the interrelations between local and extra-local forces impacting the *fokontany* is most appropriate.

Bloch correctly, in my view, argues that *fokonolona* councils, rather than being assemblies where the concerns of individual community members are represented, are action-centric bodies, formed in response to specific tasks : "it is...in terms of the business in hand that we must consider various types of *fokonolona* councils" (1971 : 47). Throughout Madagascar, this "business at hand" (however local) has always been informed by forces emanating from beyond the confines of the *fokontany*. In Ambodiaviavy, as we shall see, the RNPP's work with the *fokonolona* is transforming the institution into precisely the type of representational assembly Bloch argues it is not. In part, the present analysis seeks to describe this rather ironic dialectic.

Before turning to the oratorical discourse constituting the Ambodiaviavy meeting of 1994, the relations of domination and subordination at work in the *fokontany* must first be described. Until recently, the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* largely existed as a tool in the reproduction of Sambinoro hegemony. The Sambinoro are *tompon-tany* (masters of the land) in Ambodiaviavy because it was the line's ancestors who first "tamed" (*folaka*) the region with pathways, agricultural fields, and dwellings for both the living and the dead. The living members of the line now reproduce a traditional authority structure whose roots lie deep within this ancestral land. In the *tanàna* of Ambodiaviavy, the Sambinoro work the richest wet-rice and *tavy* fields<sup>2</sup> and own the greatest number of cattle and coffee trees (one of the few cash crops in the *fokontany*). The finest of the rich fields, however, belong to those married couples tied to the lineage through male descent (*tera-dahy*). Working from a position of considerably less power than the Sambinoro *tera-dahy* are those families tied to the

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<sup>1</sup> Such differences are, however, reported by Beaujard (1983 : 341-342 & 400) for the Ikongo Tanala residing south of the Ranomafana region. Beaujard notes that in meetings of the *fokonolo* both "traditional *kabaro*" (or, *kabary*) and "*kabaro fanjakana*" (government *kabary*) occur.

<sup>2</sup> See Le Bourdieu (1974 : 283) for an important historical discussion of the development of both *tavy* and wet rice farming in the east of Madagascar.

Sambinoro line via women (*tera-bavy*) and by fictive kinship (*miray anaka*). In the latter case, biologically unrelated Marovavy families are interpreted to be kin and given valley land between the *tanàna* of Ambodiaviavy and Matavirano. The Maromainty are an ex-slave clan (*hovavao*) in the region, and those Maromainty who live in the *fokontany* of Ambodiaviavy are next on the status hierarchy. Finally, at the bottom of the social order in Ambodiaviavy are single women, disabled men (blind, lepers, etc.), and children (who have no say at all in decision-making processes). By directing most of the projects carried out by the *fokonolona* work group, the Sambinoro have used the institution to forward their dominance. Thus, for example, the Sambinoro *tera-dahy* wet rice fields are typically the first that the *fokontany* work group breaks up into large clumps (*manadika benga*), breaks down once again (*manapoka tanim-bary*), and tramples with the help of oxen (*mihosy tanim-bary*).

### The Work of Oratory in the Ambodiaviavy Village Council Meeting

The Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* meeting of November 27, 1994 was, like most other Malagasy village council meetings, an oratorical event, or *kabary*. My analysis of the village council meeting will proceed via an examination of the relations between the formal and functional features of the *kabary* discourse. At the relatively broad analytic level of what Bloch calls the "procedure" of the *fokonolona* council (Bloch, 1971 : 49-52), the meeting unfolded through the constant repetition of a basic two part structure : a highly formalized speech by an elder was followed by a more informal public debate. In *kabary* performances more generally, the more respected a particular elder is for his everyday activity within the community and the more competence he exhibits in speech making, the more his words are considered authoritative. Within his or her turn at talk, a skilled speech maker often employs discourse formalization and a stock of ancestral words (*fiteninen-drazana*) to summarize the relevant points of the meeting's preceding discussion and advance an opinion. In debating a particular elder's position, the younger members of the assembled group speak with much less verbal artistry, employing little discourse formalization and few ancestral texts. The alternation between authoritative speech and debate can continue for hours, and often does. After three hours, the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* reached a decision regarding the fate of Koto and Samuel : the two men were ordered to return the money for the missing roofing sheets to the *fokonolona* treasury and were subjected to numerous lectures concerning the importance of communal solidarity.

The discourse of the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* meeting as a whole can be characterized at two levels : at the formal level, the

meeting moved from dialogue to monologue, while at the level of content, speakers first focused on individualism in decision making (a negatively valued behavior) and then turned to the communal direction of actions (positively valued). The overall rhetorical goal of the meeting's orators was to emphasize the importance of communal solidarity in decision making. Drawing upon Arjun Appadurai's (1990) discussion of technological change within a rural Indian community, I believe that the primary value of the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* is that of "sociality", in that "much of what is seen as valuable by members of the community, and much of what appears to underlie the central traditional forms of social life, are linkages between persons and groups, taken for granted, not only as a means but also as ends" (ibid : 188). The discourse and the projects of the *fokonolona* embody, explore, and reproduce such "centripetal" (ibid : 212) pulls of community solidarity as opposed to the "centrifugal" nature of individualistic action.

Since the establishment of the RNP in 1991, such centrifugal attractions have increased dramatically. The Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* is currently divided along age, family, gender, and lineage lines over such issues as land titling programs engineered by the Malagasy state and the World Bank, the expanding need for cash associated with the attempts by the RNPP to intensify wet rice production in the region, the uneven development of expertise in such marketable areas as forestry, tourism services, and handicrafts, and, as we shall see, the distribution of goods coming from the RNPP. I will return to these attractions shortly.

When we turn to an analysis of *individual turns at talk* within the village council meeting however, and attempt to examine how *fokonolona* solidarity was emphasized through actual discourse practices, we observe an interesting reversal of the meeting's overarching rhetorical structure. Within each of the examples presented below, performers first foregrounded the relations that should attain between individuals and the *fokonolona* and then moved to characterizations of the individualistic actions taken by some *fokonolona* members. All of the speakers manipulated the form of their utterances to convey a sense of dialogism (and even dialogue) when emphasizing ideal *fokonolona* behavior, yet switched to more monologic constructions when highlighting negatively valued acts of individualism.

The Ambodiaviavy meeting began with an elaborate *kabary* performance by Koto, the *fokonolona's* vice-president. In his speech, Koto referred to the entire *fokonolona* as kin and referenced the solidarity that is associated with this identity through such terms as "*havana*" (kin), "*fiaraha-miasa*" (cooperation), "*firaisan-kina*" (solidarity), and "*fiarahan-tsaina*" (one-mindedness). Koto then framed the problems the *fokonolona* had gathered to solve as, in part,

the result of an increase in the cost of living ("*fisondrotam-piainana*") – an increase directly associated with recent 'structural adjustments' to the Malagasy economy engineered by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. After nearly one hour of discussion, the meeting suddenly turned to the problem of the missing metal roofing sheets. It was Lala, a non-Sambinoro female shop keeper from Ankevohevo and former school teacher, who forced the subject to the floor :

SPEECH #11

Malagasy Original :

1.
  - /[fokonolona talking]
  - a. An an <
  - b. An an. Iza ary e <
  - c. An an. Iza ry Zanaka, <
  - d. Efa vory eto ihany isika ka dia izao ary no mba .... e <
  - e. Azafady KELY <
  - f. Azafady KELY <
  - g. Iza ary no mba [end others talking]/ hanontanianay anarco satria momba ny sekoly ihany izy ity :>
  - h. mmm
2.
  - a. Nanome tôle ny PARK <
  - b. mmm
  - c. dia napetaka. <
  - d. Dia ohatrinona ARY no karama nametaka ny sekoly (satria momba ny sekoly izay)? <
  - e. Ohatrinona ny karama nametaka ny tôle ? >
3.
  - a. Izay no mba tianay ho fantatray, izay satria <
  - b. fivoriana tsy misy ohatra an'izao satria moa tontolon'ny andro no antsoina aty. <

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<sup>1</sup> Key to Transcriptions:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 1.2.3.etc.        | = Verses   |
| a.b.c.etc.        | = Lines  |
| >                 | = Intonation contour curves downward by line's end |
| <                 | = Intonation contour curves upward by line's end   |
| CAPITALS          | = Loud   |
| <i>Underlines</i> | = Proverbs, aphorisms, riddles                     |
| [...]             | = Transcribers remarks                             |
| <i>.../</i>       | = Line overlap                                     |
| (...)             | = Unintelligible discourse                         |
| *                 | = Fists pounding against table                     |

- c. Izay no mba tianay ho fantatra : <
- d. ohatrinona <
- e. ny karaman' ny mpiasa <
- f. nametaka ny tôle? >

English Translation :

1.
  - /[fokonolona talking]
  - a. An an ! <
  - b. An an. This is it. <
  - c. An an. This Zanaka. <
  - d. we already met here so then this is it.... <
  - e. Excuse me please. <
  - f. Excuse me please. <
  - g. O.K. then this is what we [end others talking] / would like to ask you since it concerns the school : >
  - h. mmm
2.
  - a. The PARK gave metal roofing sheets <
  - b. mmm
  - c. then [they were] put-up. <
  - d. So, how much, THEN, are the wages for putting the metal roofing sheets on the school building. (because that's about the school)?
  - e. How much are the wages for putting-up the metal roofing sheets? >
3.
  - a. That is what we want to know - that, because... <
  - b. this is a meeting like no other because we were called here for the whole day. <
  - c. That is what we want to know : <
  - d. how much <
  - e. are the workers' wages <
  - f. for putting-up the metal roofing sheets? >

At the formal level, Lala's discourse is organized prosaically, as the intonation contours of the lines (i.e. the rise and fall of pitch across a line) help delimit the discourse into verses. In verse 1, for example, lines a-f end on a higher pitch than does the final line g. The backchannel cues (i.e., the continuous "mmm" responses voiced by a *fokonolona* elder in verse 1, line h; verse 2, line b) bear out the dialogic nature of the initial sections of Lala's performance. Dialogue turns to monologue however, when in verse 3, lines d-f, Lala slowly spells out a question which exposes the shaky foundation of Koto and Samuel's version of how the money from the metal roofing sheets was spent (the two accused men had argued that they used the money from the roofing sheet sales to pay for their own labor in nailing the remaining sheets to the damaged school building frame).

A striking feature of the events under discussion is that the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* waited for almost a month before confronting Koto and Samuel on their thefts. On numerous occasions throughout the month, members from each of the community's class, gender, and lineage identifications had witnessed actual sales of their newly acquired materials yet had remained *publicly* silent. Although I am not sure of the exact date on which the *fokonolona* had decided to confront the two men, I do know that the decision to choose Lala, a woman, to carry out the deed was made by a group of elder women in Ambodiaviavy well in advance of the meeting. This decision was based largely on the fact that the men in the *fokonolona* had avoided raising the issue of the thefts with Koto and Samuel. On the morning of the meeting, Nivo - the spokesperson for the women of the *tanàna* of Ambodiaviavy (*solo-tenam-behivavy*) who is tied to the Sambinoro line via marriage - had warned me to bring my tape-recorder to the meeting, for Lala would present important "news" (*vaovao*).

In many Malagasy speech communities, the communicative norms of women are understood to be fundamentally different than those of men. In the early 1970's, Elinor Ochs Keenan (now Elinor Ochs) began exploring the gender ideologies informing the Vakinankaratra speech communities of Madagascar's south central highlands<sup>1</sup>. The broad outlines of Ochs' portrait of Vakinankaratra speech practice also characterize the speech communities of Ranomafana. Ochs first notes that within most Vakinankaratra speech communities there exist two broad "modes of speaking": *resaka* (everyday talk) and *kabary* (oratory). Informing both of these modalities are two overarching norms of speech interaction. The first norm, that of the "de-emphasis of self", Ochs defines as the expectation that one "avoid[s] distinguishing individuals, especially oneself, apart from others" (1974 : 59). The speaker is thus careful to direct attention away from both herself (therefore avoiding pride, or *ebo*) and others (thus avoiding the harm to them that might follow from either jealous ancestors or humans). In not acting in accordance with this norm, one risks bringing shame (*henatra*) upon oneself. The second norm, "the avoidance of direct affront", seeks to minimize open and direct confrontation between community members. Ochs offers detailed descriptions of the linguistic resources available to speakers when confronted with such problematic situations as sudden encounters, anger, criticism, accusations, orders, and requests.

Finally, the entire edifice of Vakinankaratra speech behavior is gendered. While all community members engage in *resaka*, *kabary* is largely the domain of males. Women are considered to be too hot-tempered and lacking in the requisite intelligence to master the

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<sup>1</sup> See Ochs (1974, 1974a, 1976) and Keenan & Ochs (1979).

linguistic complexities of *kabary*. Moreover, because women have 'long tongues' (*lavafela*) and are constantly engaged in gossip (*fosafosa*), they lack the 'respect' (*fanajana*) necessary for the performance of the genre. Women are, therefore, argued to be constantly breaking the two speech norms of confrontation avoidance and de-emphasis of self. It is important to recognize, however, that both the ideals held by men regarding proper speech and their actual behavior rest firmly upon frequent normative transgressions on the part of women. The directness of women's discourse is often critical in ensuring the successful completion of many of the *kabary* genres. Thus, without Lala's confrontation of Koto and Samuel in Speech #1, verse 3, lines c-f, the issue of the thefts might never have been broached and the meeting considered a failure.

Returning to the 1994 meeting, Lita is the oldest male member of the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona*, a *mpanjaka* (chief) of the Maromainity (the ex-slave lineage in the area), and a widely-respected healer (*ombiasa*). Angered by Koto's use of the *fokonolona*'s ideology of kinship to direct attention away from his alleged misdeeds, and inspired by Lala's initial raising of the delicate subject of the thefts, he takes the floor. Lita's performance is short, yet represents a brilliant example of confrontation via communicative indirection.

## SPEECH #2

### Malagasy Original :

1.

/[fokonolona talking]

a. Izahay miray hevitra amin'azy io : rehcfa misy zavatra ATAO < [fokonolona talk ends]/

b. tsy mandidy no HOMANA. >

2.

a. Fa ny fokonolona... <

b. \*raha ny fokontany taloha <

c. \*ny fokontany mandeha ho azy >

d. \*ny fokontany mahalala azy >

e. fa tsy dia tena mitana azy, dia hoe avy ity tanana ity dia mandidy dia homana.>

3.

a. Ianareo izao dia mandidy dia homana fa dia ataontsika ity, dia ny karaman'ity, dia isika koa manao ny karamany <

b. Ny olona tsy mahare(ny). >

4.

a. Aiza izao no hahalalan'ny fokonolona ? <

b. Voky izao e. >

English Translation :

1.  
    //[fokonolona talking]  
a. We all share the same opinion on that : when there is something TO DO < [fokonolona talk ends]/.  
b [do] not both cut and EAT. >
2.  
a. For the fokonolona ... <  
b. \*if the former fokontany, <  
c. \*the fokontany goes by itself, <  
d. \*the fokontany knows itself. >  
e. for it does not keep [things] for itself, and [yet] when this hand comes, [it] both cuts and eats.>
3.  
a. Now you both cut and ate, but [now] this is what we are doing, this wage, we also fix their wages. <  
b. [If] the people don't hear [about it]. >
4.  
a. How then will the fokonolona know things? <  
b. You are satiated e. >

In the first line of his performance, Lita creates a proverb-type utterance from the popular Malagasy aphorism 'both cutting and eating' (*sady mandidy no homana*). He says, "*rehefa misy zavatra ataofisy mandidy no homana*" (when there is something to do/do not both cut and eat). This aphorism uses the idiom of consumption to reference the moral depravity of individualistic actions<sup>1</sup> and is partly rooted in complex Tanala concerns with specificity. In the Ranomafana region, to be specific is to be clear or easily seen (*mazava*)<sup>2</sup>, and a good person is one whose heart is clearly visible (*mazava fo*). With regard to the aphorism's central imagery, the serving of a freshly cooked pot of rice invariably involves its division into plates so as all can see their portion. Having thus exhibited the portions, the server is the last to eat. When one "both cuts and eats", one interdicts this rule of sharing by ignoring the display of portions and serving oneself before others (Rajemisa-Raolison 1985 : 441)<sup>3</sup>. In

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17. See Ferguson (1993) for an evocative discussion of the widespread African association of "eating" with political domination. A common sentiment among the Tanala populations residing on the eastern borders of the Ranomafana National Park was that the Park and the Park Project were 'eating the countryside' (*mihinana antsahany ny Park*).

<sup>2</sup> For an interesting parallel among the Zafimaniry people of Madagascar, see Bloch (1995).

<sup>3</sup> The aphorism '*sady mandidy no homana*' is also used by many Malagasy to



Tanala oratory, the sharing of one's communicative intent is also thought of in terms of clarity. Thus, Lala (Speech #3, verse 4 - see below) condemns Koto and Samuel for making the *fokonolona* gather to "consider unclear [or dark] things" (*hieritreritra zavatra maintimainty*). In general, clarity in the content of one's speech and the ability to create avenues for the continued participation of others is a highly valued feature of *kabary* in the Ranomafana region. Koto and Samuel, by being ambiguous about what they had done with the metal roofing sheets, and by not informing the *fokonolona* work groups about the wage work available, were said to be "playing politics" (*manao politika*)<sup>1</sup>.

By uttering "when there is something to do, do not both cut and eat". Lita frames an authoritative statement concerning *fokonolona* solidarity within dialogic form by adding a precedent line ("when there are things to be done"). However, as the speech nears its end (line 3a), this form of dialogue built into the form of the utterance (dialogism) is transformed into a strong sense of monologism as Lita repeats the aphorism ("both cutting and eating") without a precedent, and speaks of the negative form of individualism behind Koto and Samuel's acts.

Lita's rhetorical strategy is highly effective and is repeated by many other speakers throughout the meeting. Lala borrows his strategy (along with his evocative aphorism) in the reprimand she directs toward Koto and Samuel :

### SPEECH #3

#### Malagasy Original :

1.
  - /[Fokonolona talking]
  - a. Ka izao anie... <
  - b. Izao ary prezidenta e <
  - c. Ny zavatra tokony hataonareo AN/ < [fokonolona talk ends]
  - d. N'aiza n'aiza, n'aiza, n'aiza <
  - e. tokony tsy handidy dia homana mihitsy ianareo. <
  - f. Ny FOKONOLONA no mahazo MANDIDY amin'ny zavatra rehetrarchetrarchetrarchetra fa izay tian'ny fokonolona atao no hotanterahinareo. >
2.
  - a. ianareo komity mpanatanteraka. <
  - b. Executifs ianareo. <
  - c. Tokony tsy MIKASIKA vola....(efa niteny taty anie aho tamin'iny

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describe corrupt administrators and cow thieves (Lucien Randrianarivelo, personal communication).

<sup>1</sup> Throughout my stay in the Ranomafana region, many of my Malagasy hosts described the activities of the RNPP as "doing politics".

- e). <  
 d. Tokony tsy hikasika vola MIHITSY ianareo fa hafa hoy aho iny vola iny. >  
 3.  
 a. Fa tokony ny fokonolona no mandidy ny rehetra rehetra. <  
 b. Isika re rey olona hanao sekoly isika, <  
 c. dia izao no hataontsika, <  
 d. fa tsy ianareo no tonga dia MANGARONA atsy anaty vilany yyy.. e. <  
     /[laughter]  
 e. Tonga dia mangarona ao. <  
 f. Tena fahadisoanareo mihitsy izay. >  
 4.  
 a. Ary mahatonga ny olona rehetrarehetra hieritreritra zavatra maintimainty. >  
     /[end laughter]

English Translation :

1.  
     /[fokonolona talking]  
 a. And so it is... <  
 b. This is it president e, <  
 c. The thing you should do AN/ < [fokonolona talk ends]  
 d. wherever. <  
 e. you really should not both cut and eat. <  
 f. The FOKONOLONA has the authority to DECIDE everything and what the fokonolona wants you to do, that is what you accomplish. >  
 2.  
 a. You are the executive committee. <  
 b. You are executives. <  
 c. You should not be CONCERNED with money...(I already spoke here concerning that e). <  
 d. You should not be concerned with money AT ALL. but, as I said, that money is another thing.>  
 3.  
 a. It is the fokonolona that should decide everything. <  
 b. We the public will build the school, <  
 c. that then is what we will do, <  
 d. but not you coming then GRABBING what's in the pot yyy e. <  
     /[laughter]  
 e. You came then grabbed. <  
 f. That is really your mistake. >  
 4.  
 a. That makes all the people come to think about unclear things. >/  
     /[end laughter]

In verse 1, lines c-e, Lala argues that "the thing you should have done, is that you should not have both cut and eaten". Borrowing the aphorism initially employed by Lita, she also adds a precedent line to create a more dialogic proverb-type utterance. Dialogism, however, is again forcefully shut-down by monovocality as Lala employs another popular Malagasy aphorism and accuses Koto and Samuel of arriving on the culinary scene and "grabbing what was cooking in the pot" (verse 3, line d).

## Formalization and Social Order

The extreme degree of formalization at the levels of code structure, participant framework, and central situational focus<sup>1</sup> that characterizes the 1994 meeting centers our attention upon the relations between *kabary*, gender, and the reproduction of social life in the Ranomafana region. Once again, the work of Maurice Bloch offers a path into the complexities of these relations. As part of an influential argument concerning the links between political language and traditional authority, Bloch has written that in severing the ties that bind discourse to its contextual surround, formalization also "removes the authority for the event from the speaker himself, so that he speaks when using formalization less and less for himself and more and more for his role" (1975 : 16; also see 1974). Bloch's concern with how the formal restrictions upon the code of political language shifts participant focus beyond everyday exchanges to more established and encompassing forms of agency is important. However, when Bloch goes on to equate formality with the strictly coercive side of traditional authority, he assumes a 'Western', referentially-based understanding of language (Silverstein 1987 & 1987a), overlooking the type of metapragmatic force operational in many Malagasy oratorical performances.

Toward understanding this metapragmatic force as it operated in the Ambodiaviavy *jokonolona* meeting of 1994 we might first observe that at key moments during the meeting, the range of diversities among the individuals and groups enacting the event is transformed into unities via the formalization of participant roles. The meeting effectively creates the broad categories of *raiamandreny voalohany* (first tier elders), *raiamandreny faharoa* (second tier elders), *zokin-tanora voalohany* (first tier youth leaders; all men), *zokin-tanora faharoa* (second tier youth leaders; all men), and *tanora* (young men from approximately 16 to 30 years of age). Secondly, much of the meeting's discourse is composed of *teny an-kolaka* (speech that winds). Such speech is replete with a stock set of phrases, intonation

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<sup>1</sup> See Irvine (1979) for a discussion of each of these three aspects of formalization.

patterns, and allusions that are generally associated with the 'words of the ancestors'. The use of such winding speech helps to further define the lineage (including the line's ancestors) as the agent of speech, and not the orator. The *kabarin-pokonolona* does not, therefore, just represent Tanala social ties; rather, it performatively constitutes them, putting them on display, and giving groups and individuals a chance to define and redefine their value.

The Ambodiaviavy meeting is in no way void of individual creativity. Recall that the rhetorical structure of the Ambodiaviavy meeting as a whole moves from dialogue to monologue. Toward the beginning of the meeting, many members take the opportunity to display their specific opinions of Koto and Samuel's behavior and debate the opinions of others. These opinions are specific in that they were informed by a speaker's unique position within the intersecting strata of age, gender, lineage, and wealth differentiating community members. In expressing their opinions, many speakers dismantled the ancestral order by cutting ancestral words out of that order and splicing them into their ongoing oratories. These acts of "decontextualization" and "recontextualization" (Bauman & Briggs 1990) were accomplished through various poetic and rhetorical devices that isolated sections of discourse from ongoing social interaction and framed them intertextually - in relation to the aura of authority emanating from other ancestral words. Such authority served to strengthen the display of their own opinions and to demonstrate their individual creativity. Having thus expressed their thoughts and oratorical skills, and having reached a decision regarding Koto and Samuel's actions, speakers use the rest of the meeting to pronounce this decision. These pronouncements are invariably couched in monologues concerning the importance of communal solidarity in decision making and the ancestors from whom this solidarity derives.

Within their individual turns at talk, speakers reverse the meeting's overall rhetorical structure. Thus, formal dialogism is employed when opinions of *fokonolona* solidarity are stated, and formal monologism used when the overly individualistic behaviors of Koto and Samuel are being castigated. I contend that through such rhetorical reversals, speakers create avenues for communicative participation. Authoritative statements concerning negative behavior are unequivocal, and as such are easily picked-up by the next speaker for further poetic elaboration.

Throughout Madagascar, *kabary* performance is primarily the domain of men. Lala's participation in the Ambodiaviavy meeting, although consistent with the *teny-an-kolaka* style, departed from what was universally defined in Ambodiaviavy as skilled oratory. Lala's directness was confrontational, singling out Koto and Samuel for their misdeeds and thereby threatening to bring shame upon the entire

*fokonolona*. In the confrontational role reserved for women<sup>1</sup> and in Lala's oratorical performance more generally, we glimpse the complex relations between "order and risk" (Keane, 1991) at play in the social life of the Tanala communities of the Ranomafana region. The fact that women take such risk in broaching issues challenging the social order (risking further erosion of that order) speaks to the high value of those social goals that the men's oratorical exchanges are designed to achieve. Also, the extreme formalization at work in the *kabarim-pokonolona* as a whole, along with the effort to shape one's turn at talk to enable the further participation of other speakers indexes just how risky the renewal of the social order is. Ancestry is a "difficult" (*sarotra*) force: one's use of ancestral words must proceed with great care, the casting of guilt must be spread across many shoulders, and action, more generally, must not be that of the individual.

### Contextualizing Women's Discourse

In the preceding analysis of the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* meeting, I argued that Lala's direct discourse along with the creation of discursive pathways enabling the multi-party elaboration of the aphorism on both cutting and eating constituted the primary linguistic strategies by which community members worked to reproduce an ethic of sociality against centrifugal pulls of individualism. As it stands, however, this argument is both limited and potentially problematic. First, the argument barely scratches the surface of the various struggles being worked out in the meeting and the complex relations through which they are linked. Second, the representation of the speech difference of Tanala women presented here - like the notion of 'la femme malgache' framing the present volume as a whole - is easily incorporated into Western developmentalist readings of 'third world women'. Chandra Mohanty (1991) convincingly argues that born from the abstract vision of patriarchy residing within many Western feminist discourses is the category of the "average third world woman". In the constitution of this category, a conception of womanhood based upon a generalized understanding of oppression as gendered is moored to an interpretation of third world familial, economic, religious, linguistic, etc. institutions as 'developing'. The result is a discourse that "defines third world women as subjects *outside* social relations, instead of looking at the way women are constituted *through* these very [institutions]" (*ibid* : 72 ; emphasis in

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<sup>1</sup> In her discussion of Vakinankaratra *kabary vody ondry* (marriage request oratory), Ochs (1974 : 214) analyzes the role of the *mpanala dilana*, or 'relievers of bottlenecks': women who "answer" - that is, take up the role of responder in the dialogic structure of the *kabary* - if her comments can resolve a particularly troubling impasse in the men's negotiations.

original). An analysis of the emergence of womanhood from the multiple and often contradictory contexts of class, race, ethnicity, age, and lineage not only helps avoid the sort of colonialist move elaborated by Mohanty, but also leads beyond the binary conception of domination and resistance encountered therein. The scope of the present study should, therefore, ideally be broadened to include the entire arena of symbolic contestation, of which the meeting represents only one moment, and within which the more global forces of capital accumulation at work in the Ranomafana region are articulated to already existing production relations. Suffice it for the remainder of this article to consider how the speech practices specific to the contemporary Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* enable women to express their interests (or, needs) while simultaneously working to create the positions from which these interests arise.

### **Defining RNPP Need Interpretation Dynamics and Considering their Effects**

Earlier I noted that much of the interaction between the RNPP and the people of Ambodiaviavy occurs within *fokonolona* meetings. The *fokonolona* is, in fact, the primary stage of Park Project/people interactions throughout the Park's "peripheral zone"<sup>1</sup>. In its work with area *fokonolona*, the RNPP has clearly articulated its argument that success in conserving the Ranomafana region's resources hinges upon the participation of Malagasy communities in Park Project planning. This is not to say, however, that the RNPP recognizes these communities as having any legal rights to the land within the Park. Rather, the Park Project assumes that local farmers will soon stretch their *tavy* fields to the Park's borders. By acting early enough to help these communities meet their "needs" by means more "sustainable" than *tavy*, the RNPP hopes to avoid a life and death struggle for the Park's resources (Grenfell, 1994 : 64). Since the creation of the RNPP, therefore, the reproduction of Ambodiaviavy social relations in and through *fokonolona* performances is increasingly linked to a wider "politics of need interpretation" (Frazer 1989). It is to a description of the contours of this arena of need discussions and the relations of women to them that we now turn.

Discussions of need are ubiquitous to RNPP/resident interactions. The Park Project first broached the issue of needs with Ranomafana residents during a series of Park delimitation tours in September of 1987. At this time, Duke University researchers associated with the RNPP, officials from Madagascar's Department of Water and Forests, and resident 'forest guides' approached elders from many of the

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<sup>1</sup> The RNPP designated a five kilometer wide zone around the periphery of the national park wherein ICDP interventions would be focused.

*fokontany* surrounding the Park. Gathering in open public spaces, the group "spoke first, introducing the members of the team and exposing the reason for their visit" (Department of Water and Forest Document #c/j.28, 1987 : 1). The group then informed those gathered that [1] a national park would soon be created to protect the area's ecosystem; [2] that all activities (especially *tavy*) that endanger the Namorana watershed - the watershed upon which the region's many ecosystems are based - would be interdicted ; and [3] that the United States was cooperating in the project and would "furnish aid to the inhabitants bordering the park for their social problems" (*ibid.* : 1). *Fokonolona* elders were then asked about their needs ("*desiderata*"). Shortly after these delimitation tours, "socioeconomic" and "health" studies were carried out by the Project that also asked residents of their needs (Ferraro & Rakotondrajaona, 1992, Kightlinger et. al., 1992, RNPP 1990). Indeed, throughout the first five year phase of the Project, need discussions formed an important part of the many visits and evaluations performed by the different components and subcomponents of the RNPP and RNPP-related institutions (at the time of research, the components of the Project included health, education, agriculture, forestry, conservation, and evaluation).

A basic assumption of the present analysis is that needs are complex interpretive (and therefore ideological) matters. The RNPP, claiming that much of its conservation/development strategy is based upon the initial needs surveys just described, argues that the intensification of wet rice farming and animal husbandry by residents in permanent valley settlements is the best way to protect the Park. The processes through which these development goals were reached, operationalized, and implemented lead us directly to the specificity of the need interpretation dynamics characterizing the RNPP. A particularly useful road map of the need politics terrain in general is the work of Nancy Frazer (1989 & 1995). Frazer first points out that claims concerning need are relational : x is needed in order to y. Thus, a Malagasy farmer participating in the RNPP might claim that she needs rice in order to feed her family. Once one descends beneath the generality of such a "thin" need, however, to ask what more concretely is needed in order to grow rice, an associated set of need claims begin to "unravel" (1989 : 163). The woman might now respond that in order to grow rice, fertilizer and better water management techniques are needed, and that, moreover, these inputs should be provided free of cost and not under the terms of a credit arrangement. Although the 'in-order-to' chains involved in this need claim could be considerably lengthened, the important point with regard to need negotiation is that the more specific the need claim becomes the greater the role played by interpretation (and, therefore, culturally-specific values) in

advancing the claim<sup>1</sup>.

The relational structure of need claims provides Frazer with the foundation for her theory of need interpretation politics. She argues that such politics involve three moments. First, groups debate the political status of a particular need. Then, once the need is recognized as legitimate, a struggle ensues over how the need will be interpreted and therefore satisfied. Here, the 'in-order-to' relations of need claims are up for grabs as various groups attempt to control the direction taken by these relations. Finally, parties work to ensure or deny satisfactions of a given need. Formative in all of these struggles are the culturally-specific communicative styles, norms, vocabularies, idioms, and paradigms of argumentation that groups use to press their claims (*ibid.* : 164-165).

The justification for and operation of the RNPP's development policy occurs largely through a need interpretation strategy whose guiding philosophical principle is distributive economic justice and whose primary operational modality is bureaucratic. First, the RNPP seeks to help distribute economic opportunity evenly throughout those populations affected by its land enclosures. The various interpretive differences within and between area Tanala communities plays a strictly negative role in Park Project assistance. Socioeconomic studies carried out by and for the RNPP, for example, are relatively elaborate in their description and criticism of those individuals and groups privileged by traditional authority structures (Kottak & Rakotoarisoa, 1990, Peters, 1994, Samisoa, 1992), gendered relations of domination and subordination (Kottak & Rakotoarisoa, 1990, RNPP, n.d.), market peculiarities (Dai Peters, 1993, Wallace, 1992), and state services. In Ambodiaviavy, the RNPP clearly stated to *fokonolona* leaders its expectation that the materials donated for the repair of the school building should be used for the good of all residents.

In approaching the need claims of residents, secondly, the RNPP relies upon abstract, formally rational rules of organization and interpretation which work collectively to depoliticize claims. I have already mentioned that during a 1987 series of Park boundary delimitation tours, RNPP officials entered *fokontany* surrounding the Park, informed the residents of the Park's creation, and then notified them that *tavy* within Park would not be permitted. From the very beginning of these 'Park/people need discussions, resident needs for more *tavy* land within Park boundaries (a need claim I encountered on numerous occasions throughout my research) was denied the status of a debatable issue.

As rice is the staple crop throughout the Ranomafana region, the

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Heller (1993).



intensification of wet-rice production now became the focus of the RNPP delimitation tour/need talks. Many residents, now realizing that any significant improvement of their wet-rice yields would require a good deal of expensive input, began pressing claims for fertilizer, improved rice seed varieties, and the expertise and tools required to better manage existing water supplies. A majority of the Ambodiaviavy farmers I spoke with knew that outside expertise in water management was necessary. These farmers argued, however, that for this expertise to be appropriately transmitted they needed an arrangement wherein training would be directed at certain internally selected members of the *tanàna* who would then become responsible for disseminating the new information to the rest of the community. Throughout its first phase, the RNPP interpreted this need for expertise along completely different lines than residents had. Significantly, no meetings or informal discussions were held to define the *specific* content of this need. Eventually, the RNPP interpretation of the resident's need dominated and a "village animator" (a man foreign to the Ranomafana region and selected by the RNPP) was hired to live and work in the *tanàna*. Through the animator, a large portion of life in Ambodiaviavy came under the scrutiny of the Park Project.

To summarize, a tension between Park Project solicitations of Tanala participation in program planning via need interpretations and the Project's subsequent depoliticization and redirection of such interpretations pervades the struggle over land and labor in the Ranomafana region. At the time fieldwork was carried out for the present article (1994), Ranomafana residents had lived with this need politics dynamic for close to four years. The frequent expression by residents of the idea that the RNPP plays politics ("*manao politika ny Park*") with their lives barely contained a simmering anger with the Project.

This RNPP need politics dynamic has had complex affects upon the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona*. On the one hand, the *fokonolona* as a whole has developed a strong sense of its collective interests. Members are growing increasingly skilled in using the institution to combat both the RNPP's strategy of abstracting their need claims and attempts by particular groups living within the *fokontany* to gain from Project assistance. Recall the centrality of the notion of specificity (forcefully presented in Lita's aphorism) during the meeting's oratorical exchanges. Throughout the meeting, council members approached Koto and Samuel's actions as being enabled by a lack of specific information concerning RNPP/*tanàna* interactions. Participants spoke of the paucity of collective knowledge regarding how many roofing sheets and bags of cement were delivered, who the materials came from, who they were designed to benefit, which work groups were to perform the task of repairing the damaged school, and who had

spoken with the RNPP in the first place. By the end of the meeting, discussion of this lack of detailed information crystallized into the following set of unwritten guidelines to be followed by the *fokonolona* president, vice-president, and treasurer : [1] whenever RNPP-*fokonolona* meetings take place, all *fokonolona* members must receive advance notification to ensure the full participation of interested members; [2] if any agreements are made within such a meeting, all interested members must have full access to the specific details of the agreement; and [3] any projects resulting from RNPP-*tanàna* agreements must be assigned to the appropriate work group.

In seeking guidelines for future relations with the Park Project, *fokontany* members were also challenging Sambinoro dominance. A broad range of the meeting's participants suspected that upon selling the metal roofing sheets, Samuel was funneling the cash to the Sambinoro *mpanjaka* (his wife's father). Although Koto's actions were seen as being based on more individualist grounds (most knew that in cooperating with the Sambinoro, he was ensuring his position as vice-president of the *fokontany*), they were ultimately understood as being reproductive of Sambinoro power.

RNPP need politics have, on the other hand, impacted the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* in a different direction. Ironically, the interpretive differences between members of the *fokonolona* are increasingly being mined in claiming assistance from the RNPP. The public arena that is the *fokonolona* has broadened considerably to include previously unheard voices. It is here that the speech practices of women are having the greatest affect. At the 1994 meeting, Lala's challenge to both individualism and Sambinoro privilege served as a powerful example to many groups within the *fokontany*. The importance of this example should not be underestimated. Since the 1994 meeting, the region's poorest women have become increasingly vocal at *fokonolona* meetings. Elderly widows, women from families with little access to fertile land, and the wives and daughters of disabled men are all calling attention to their difference in very bold styles. Women of non-Tanala identification, who, in the past were largely excluded from Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* decisions are also using their own particular histories and abilities to enforce a tendency toward specificity in need interpretations. These interests are now beginning to solidify into such associations as women's cooperatives and women's health groups. Such associations host specific idioms, narrative styles, and paradigms of argumentation that offer women influential points of identification.

## Conclusion

By way of conclusion we might explore the limits of the preceding analysis of the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* meeting for the directions they hold in charting future study. First, the analysis was restricted to the *fokontany* of Ambodiaviavy only, and considered data from the relatively short period of two years. Research in other communities participating in the RNPP might indicate whether those changes in the *fokonolona* observed in Ambodiaviavy are occurring elsewhere. Also of interest would be a study that followed the evolution of these highly unstable changes in the council through time. We saw that the reaction by the Ambodiaviavy *fokonolona* to the RNPP's universalistic approach to assistance entailed challenges to Sambinoro hegemony in the *fokontany*. Shifts in relations of domination and subordination in Ambodiaviavy have markedly eroded the ability of the Sambinoro to claim ancestral rights to land within the Park (an effort that might have assisted all residents to rest control of their futures from RNPP planners). A unified front seeking land now enclosed within the Park no longer exists in Ambodiaviavy. This is not to rule out, however, the possibility that new alliances will form in this struggle. As I was leaving Ranomafana, a group of the region's *mpanjaka* had already held numerous formal and informal discussions on how best to forward their need for more *tavy* land. It is my guess that in the RNPP region the very modern tension between strivings for universal empowerment and the pluralist paths toward this goal will only deepen in the years to come.

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## ABSTRACT

In speech communities throughout Madagascar, men and women are understood to possess their own unique speech styles. Nowhere do the differences in these styles make a more dramatic appearance than in oratorical discourse, or *kabary*. Two of the more important roles women hold in *kabary* performances involve the reparation of breakdown in men's oratorical exchanges and the confrontation of anti-social actions. Although analyses exist of the emergence of these roles from specific sociohistorical contexts, the productivity of women's discourse styles - that is, how women's speech practice in turn shapes the institutions from which it emerges and provides grounds for the development of novel gender identities - remains relatively unexplored. In an attempt to fill this gap, the present article centers upon the *kabary* performances constituting a particular village council (*fokonolona*) meeting in the southeast of the island. The speech practice of one woman is foregrounded as mediating a set of complex struggles over land and labor now occurring at the border of one of Madagascar's largest national parks.

## RESUME

Dans toutes les communications sociales orales à travers Madagascar, les hommes et les femmes possèdent leur propre style oratoire. Nulle part ailleurs, on ne peut déceler cette différence que dans les discours oratoires, comme le *kabary*. Deux des rôles les plus importants joués par les femmes lors des performances des *kabary* impliquent la réparation des impasses créées par les échanges entre les hommes et la confrontation des actes anti-sociaux. On peut rencontrer des analyses sur l'émergence de ces rôles dans des contextes sociohistoriques spécifiques, mais la productivité des styles de discours des femmes - c'est-à-dire, comment les discours des femmes façonnent en retour les institutions par lesquelles ils sont apparus et fournissent des bases pour un nouveau développement d'identités sur le genre - reste relativement inexplorée. Pour remplir ce vide, le présent article se concentre sur les performances de *kabary* lors d'une réunion de conseil villageois (*fokonolona*) dans le Sud-Est de Madagascar.

La réunion en question s'est tenue dans le village d'Ambodiaviavy. L'assistance était composée pour la plupart par des membres de la terre ancestrale (*tanindrazana*) des Sambinoro, région récemment accaparée par le Parc National de Ranomafana et constituant un aspect important pour se reproduire en tant que Sambahano Tanala.

Les rapports entre les gérants du Parc de Ranomafana et les Sambinoro se limitent, en majeure partie, dans le cadre d'un programme de conservation-développement (ICDP). Les ICDPs sont, en général, interventionnistes dans leurs approches à la conservation : le processus de conservation implique le "développement" de la population résidente qui, dans son effort de se reproduire en tant que communauté, menace l'existence de l'écosystème délimité. Le discours développementaliste du Parc National définit stratégiquement la pratique tanala du tavy de "culture sur brûlis" et ajoute que c'est à la fois un moyen "non-viable" pour la satisfaction des "besoins de base" ainsi que la principale menace des ressources de la région. Les interventions de "développement" autour du Parc sont donc pour la plupart centrées sur la suppression de l'extension du tavy en aidant les résidents Tanala à mieux exploiter la valeur commerciale de la forêt pour satisfaire les nouveaux besoins conséquents à la perte de leur terre.

Ainsi, depuis la création du Parc, la reproduction des relations sociales d'Ambodiaviavy, par le biais des réunions du *fokonolona* (en même temps que les performances oratoires les constituant) est de plus en plus liée à une politique plus étendue d'interprétation des besoins. Dans cet article, on voit que la pratique du discours par une femme d'Ambodiaviavy sert de modérateur (médiateur) pour un ensemble de changements sociaux rapides et complexes (surtout en ce qui concerne les rapports de genre). De ce fait, l'article présente une courte discussion critique de la notion de "femme malgache".



## FAMINTINANA

Samy manana ny fomba fandaharan-teniny ny lehilahy sy ny vehivavy amin'ireo foko eto Madagasikara. Tsy hita anefa izany fahasamihafana izany raha tsy eo amin'ny lahateny toy ny kabary ihany. Anjara roa lehibe no raisin'ny vehivavy eo amin'io sehatry ny kabary io, dia ny fanarenana korontana vokatry ny fifamalian'ny lehilahy, sy ny fanatrehana ireo fihetsika mifanohitra amin'ny fiarahamonina. Hita izany eo amin'ny fandinihana ny zavatra sasantsasany nitranga teo amin'ny tantaran'ny fiarahamonina, saingy ny tena lanjan'ireny fitenenan'ny vehivavy ireny, izany hoe ny fomba nanarenany ny toe-javatra teo amin'ny sehatra nitrangany sy ny nanetrahany fototra vaovao hiaingany indray dia tsy mbola nisy nijery loatra. Koa ny famenoana ny banga eo amin'izany asan'ny kabary izany no kendren'ity labatsoratra ity, ary ny fivoriam-pokonolona tao amin'ny tanànan'Ambodiaviavy ao amin'ny faritra atsimo atsinanan'ny Nosy no niangana.

Vory tao tanin'izay ny Sambinoro tompon-tanindrazan'ny faritra izay noraisina ho Valan-javaboaharim-pirenena ao Ranomafana.

Voafetra eo amin'ny tetika asa "fiarovana sy fampandrosoana" ny fifandraisan'ny Sambinoro sy ny mpiandraikitra ilay vala amin-dry zareo ireto, ny hoe "fiarovana" dia tsy maintsy ampiarahina amin'ny "fampandrosoana" ny mponina eo an-toerana izay heverina fa mety hanimba ny tontolo manodidina ny fitomboan'ny isany. Ambaran-dry zareo àry fa ny fomban'ny Tanala mamboly vary an-tavy dia manimba ny ala izay haren'ny faritany, sady tsy mahavita nyiveloman'ny olona akory. Noho izany ny tetika amin'ny "fampandrosoana" atao dia mikendry indrindra ny famerana ny fitaran'ny tavy, fa manampy kosa ny mponina hahay hitrandraka ny ala ho setrin'ny fandoazany ny tanindrazany.

Koa hatramin'ny niandohan'ny Vala, ny fifandraisana ara-piarahamonina ao Ambodiaviavy (sy ny lahateny samihafa ao anatiny) dia mifamatotra amin'ny tetika sy fiheverana izay filan'ny olona. Asehon'ny lahatsoratra fa ny lahatenin'ny vehivavy iray ao Ambodiaviavy, dia mpanelanelana lalina sy mpandamina, indrindra eo amin'ny fifandraisan'ny mpiara-monina.

Eo an-pamaranana dia misy ady hevitra arosan'ny mpanoratra momba ny fiheverana ny "vehivavy malagasy".