

SUMMARY

The study completed by a team of historians and geography scholars analyses the interactions among three Malagasy towns and their big market places. Indeed, these places of strong human concentration remain central in the expression of economic exchanges at different levels, from a number of localities to the whole national territory. For this reason, they have very often been the focus of city restructuring and rehabilitation projects initiated by the State and different private organisations. Also, in spite of the differing environments between Antananarivo, with its emblematic Friday market (the Zoma) which spread out in 1997, Antsiranana (Diego Suarez), the stronghold of a government, rather isolated in the extreme north of the country, and Antsirabe, the capital city of a rich agricultural province perched on the central High Lands, long-term presence (from the last decades of the 19th Century to 2003) makes it possible to make comparisons. Thus, in the exercise of their sovereignty, successive regimes (from the period of the Kingdom of Madagascar to the last decades

of the post colonial period) have always sought to control these strategic areas by regulating their functioning and by structuring the urban landscape. But the authorities have not always succeeded in this quest, as they couldn't ignore the practices of those who brought activity to the markets. Layers of groupings that bring together areas that were more or less far from one another, bringing activity to regional areas (especially for Antsirabe) and securing the integration of their users into global structures through access to an ever increasing selection of products, the markets are first of all places of transactions that contribute to the dynamism of towns. But their anarchical growth is also one of the symptoms of the crisis of urban centres that draw increasing numbers of migrants. Also, these intermediary spaces in the integration of migrants from the outskirts of cities or other provinces give shape to forms of socialisation which can become dangerous for authorities during periods of political activism.