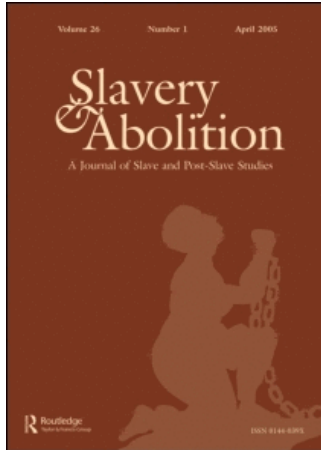


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Larceny in Madagascar and Beyond

PIER M. LARSON

On 1 April 2001 a lengthy review of my book, *History and Memory in the Age of Enslavement: Becoming Merina in Highland Madagascar, 1770–1822* (hereafter *History and Memory*),¹ was circulated on H-Net Humanities Online, a network of email discussion lists on humanities and social science topics managed from the United States. The author of the review was Gwyn Campbell, an economic historian of Madagascar and professor of English at the Université d'Avignon, France.² Campbell's review of *History and Memory* was accepted by the editorial staff of H-SAfrica as part of a roundtable series 'in which interesting new books are reviewed by multiple authors'.³ Campbell's essay circulated on H-SAfrica and H-Africa and was posted permanently on the H-Net Reviews website.⁴ A full year later, a little altered version of Campbell's H-Net review was reprinted by the editors of this journal as a ten-page review essay under the title 'Larceny in the Highlands of Madagascar'. Campbell's essay marks the only time that *Slavery and Abolition* has reprinted a previously published review.⁵

In his review, Campbell ignores the central arguments of my book and, instead, identifies subsidiary contentions as key. He mistakenly asserts that *History and Memory* is an 'oral history' posed as 'a contrast and corrective to the empiricist trend'. Campbell offers criticisms of my sources, having incorrectly asserted their provenance, authorship, and nature. Finally, he raises a variety of objections about specific issues peripheral to the arguments forwarded. In most of these criticisms, Campbell mischaracterizes my points. In sum, Campbell snipes at the edges of my book, and his own contentions are largely incorrect. Because a reader of 'Larceny in the Highlands of Madagascar' could mistake *History and Memory* as a 'secret history of women' in 'the land of long hair', as Campbell writes, I commence with a summary of the scope, aims, and arguments of my book.⁶

History and Memory is a study of the socio-cultural impact of the Indian Ocean export slave-trade on Imerina, in the highlands of

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Madagascar.⁷ The book speaks broadly to current historical research on enslavement, slavery, and the slave-trade in Atlantic Africa. It takes as its subject the circumstances and consequences of enslavement, understood as the act of capture and removal of individuals from their places of origin. Unlike most work on the slave-trade, *History and Memory* does not follow the lives and experiences of slaves. Rather, it focuses on the communities from which slaves were drawn, examining a variety of strategies within the slaving frontiers of highland Madagascar. Among the issues explored are relationships between captors and the kin of victims, evolving moral codes of enslavement, changing methods of enslavement, responses by those who had lost kin to the chiefs and merchants implicated in the enslavements, transformations in gender relationships and divisions of labour, and the political tactics of chiefs in slaving frontiers.

The primary argument of the book is that the modern Merina ethnic identity of highland Madagascar emerged in its earliest form, along with key transformations in highland Malagasy cultural practices such as tomb architecture and secondary burial, from the ashes of a period of intense enslavement and through the ensuing cultural politics of communities and their rulers. Even in the decades following the passing of the slaving frontier beyond Imerina, the king and his citizen subjects frequently referenced enslavement and its traumas in their public discourse and rituals. Social memory and amnesia of enslavement played complex and important roles in these processes and in the fashioning of an historical consciousness in highland Madagascar. (By memory, social memory, and historical memory I mean non-contemporary historical accounts, usually in African languages if verbal or written, but also fragments of historical consciousness as manifested in ritual and other visual and performative media.)

As it relates to historical research in Atlantic Africa, *History and Memory* engages several areas of concern to readers of this journal. My book brings the interests and preoccupations of Atlantic scholars to its focus on the Indian Ocean and, in turn, challenges some of that work with the experiences of the peoples of Madagascar. I argue, for example, for a more capacious and complex conception of the African Diaspora that not only extends that Diaspora, geographically speaking, to areas external to Africa such as the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean, but also to destination societies of slaves *within* the African continent. I question an emerging consensus that suggests most slaves were captured within Africa as prisoners of war. By its interest in history and memory as methodological concerns and in the roles of memory and amnesia of enslavement in the making of African ethnic identities, cultural practices, and historical consciousnesses, *History and Memory* joins more recent

studies on these topics by Ralph Austen and Rosalind Shaw. The history of Merina identity and enslavement that frames the central thesis of the monograph is directly relevant to recent inquiries by Robin Law, Paul Lovejoy, David Northrup, and Douglas Chambers into Yoruba and Ibo identities and their relationships to the Atlantic slave-trade. The specific attention *History and Memory* devotes to how kin of captured persons sometimes negotiated with and at other times confronted the slavers and merchants who marched their kin toward the coast engages and elaborates upon the work of Walter Rodney and Joseph Miller in other parts of Africa. While addressing a variety of themes relevant to the Atlanticists, I have striven in my book to create intellectual bridges among the interlinked histories but disparate historiographies of Africa, Madagascar, and the Indian Ocean.

Of particular concern to *History and Memory* is how various lines of historical evidence can be brought to bear on issues of enslavement and the slave-trade. Noting an intense reliance on European archival and quantitative data in recent historical monographs on African slavery and the Atlantic slave-trade, I ask how African historical consciousness, or 'memory', might influence new professional histories, inform those already written, or open new lines of critical inquiry. Those 'memories', or non-contemporary references to enslavement, come in a variety of forms. Some are modern, created in interview and ethnographic situations by academic researchers and the individuals with whom they interact. Others were created in the past, when African historical narratives were recorded in one form or another. They may have been carefully researched among kin and surrounding notables by a schoolteacher, for example, and synthesized in a notebook. They may be found in published fiction and family histories, in genealogies, on bits of paper kept under mattresses, and in the margins of Bibles. And they are sometimes evoked in the context of ritual. Most, but not all, memories are in African languages and deeply rooted in the cultural logic of the places and peoples from which they derive. And they are challenging. African memories often place slaving and mercantile activities in entirely different frameworks from those in which modern scholars set them. Understanding them fully requires a deep engagement with African languages. In *History and Memory*, I explore one compilation of such vernacular memories collected and published by a French Jesuit in highland Madagascar in the mid-nineteenth century. I conclude that no genre of historical source ought automatically to trump others, but that scholars should strive to bring each to bear in their professional narratives. This project is the classical challenge that African history has set down for scholars since its academic renaissance in the 1960s.

Misidentified Arguments

Into these wide-ranging debates, Campbell intervenes with comments specific to Madagascar. The most outstanding characteristic of his review essay is its failure to address the substantive and overarching arguments of the more than 400 pages of *History and Memory*. Notwithstanding an explicit, and enumerated, statement in the book's preface of the five principle arguments advanced in *History and Memory* (pp.xv–xviii; all page citations in this essay are to my book), Campbell writes that 'The central theme of [Larson's] case study is the hidden history of women in Imerina, in the central highlands of Madagascar, from 1770 to 1822.' The claim is incorrect and a fundamental distortion of the book. Women and gender are interests but not key themes. Campbell's assertion focuses much of his critical attention on subsidiary sections of two chapters rather than on the key themes and arguments of *History and Memory* developed in its individual chapters. To Campbell's criticisms of these sections, I return in the latter parts of this rejoinder.

The second extraordinary quality of Campbell's essay is its consistent misstating of the content and arguments of *History and Memory*. Commencing at the beginning, misinterpretation continues throughout the essay. 'Assuming the role of spokesman for "cultural" and "oral" historians,' writes Campbell in the first paragraph of his essay, 'Pier Larson launches an attack on "orthodox" empirical historians of Africa and the slave-trade for their neglect of "oral" history.' 'His list of prominent "culprits"' he continues later, 'includes Walter Rodney, Phyllis Martin, Joseph Inikori, Paul Lovejoy, David Eltis, Joseph Miller, Patrick Manning, Robin Law, John Thornton, Stanley Engerman, James Searing and Martin Klein.' 'Larson advocates rather research into "social memory,"' notes Campbell, and his

polemic reflects a deep schism in the historical and social sciences in North America, one that needs to be set against the rise of Afro-American studies and the historical legacy of America's involvement in slavery and the slave-trade. Larson thus throws down the academic gauntlet and offers his study of Madagascar as a model of oral and cultural history, a contrast and corrective to the empiricist trend.

In these early passages of his review, Campbell characterizes *History and Memory* as positing 'oral' and 'empirical' history as dichotomous and opposed, and as advocating the former as a corrective over the latter. Readers of my book will notice the absurdity of these statements. To begin with, I do not write of 'oral history' and 'empirical history', but of 'history and memory' (which, despite my definitions, Campbell misconstrues as

equivalent to 'oral' and 'empirical/archival' history) and of the uses and characteristics of contemporary and non-contemporary data. One of the key arguments woven throughout *History and Memory* – and among those themes enumerated and summarized in its preface – is that history and memory are 'distinct yet complementary ways of apprehending the past and ascribing meaning to it' (p.xvii). 'I do not share', I write again later, 'the pervasive professional separation of history and memory as fundamentally differing modes of apprehending the past', and I distance myself from scholars such as Jacques LeGoff and Pierre Nora who do (p.286). I place signposts and reminders of this central argument in various chapters of *History and Memory* (pp.37–41, 163–7).

While Campbell claims incorrectly that I am an advocate for 'oral history' as against 'empirical history', I do not embrace these terms myself, nor do I identify *History and Memory* with the former. I understand history and memory, and historical accounts of various sorts, as complementary and coming to modern historians in the form of a variety of distinctive narratives that share similar properties. Campbell has invented me as an 'oral historian' and *History and Memory* as an 'oral history'. He claims I criticize an 'empiricist trend'. He is wrong on all counts. The memories my book explores are largely manuscript, not verbal memories. I do not claim *History and Memory* as an 'oral history'. My work is not set against 'empirical historians' – I consider myself to be one. And I do not criticize an 'empiricist trend', as I write below, but a declining scholarly engagement with African memories of enslavement.

'Oral' and 'empirical' history, like history and memory, are false dichotomies. 'As memories filtered through the historical consciousness of living generations,' I write on page 39, 'popular histories like the *Likota lya Bankoya* and the *Tantara* [vernacular language narratives about which more later] are not equivalent to contemporary evidence, yet both contemporary and memorial evidence is channeled through cultural and historiographical filters, and each is nevertheless useful in understanding the past.' In *History and Memory*, I employ and explore a wide variety of historical narratives, including journals, letters, reports, memoirs, interviews, manuscripts, and other sources in the French, English, and Malagasy languages. I am highly critical of formalist approaches to 'oral history' and 'oral tradition' that distinguish them from 'empiricism' or 'the archives' as necessarily separate types of sources or as dissimilar methodologies (see especially pp.39–40). The notion that 'empiricism' and 'oral tradition' are mutually exclusive or that empirical data cannot be gleaned from oral tradition, for example, is bizarre. Modern historians have come to recognize both the 'empirical' qualities of verbal knowledge and the 'fiction' of the archives. In African history, the work of David William

Cohen and Elizabeth Tonkin are particularly representative of the general approach I adopt in *History and Memory*.

As for the evidentiary basis of *History and Memory*, the text is grounded primarily on research in eight different archival repositories in four countries (they are enumerated on pp.383–4), and secondarily on vernacular texts and other narratives collected in Madagascar during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a few of them by me. I do not privilege one type of source over others, but weigh them in each discussion and interweave them in my chapters. The language and internal architecture of *History and Memory* are precise on issues of evidence and methodology. Sustained discussions of my sources are found in chapter 1 (pp.32–44), chapter 5 (pp.163–5), and chapter 7 (pp.258–68), while shorter notices lie scattered throughout the text and the notes. Pushing historical evidence into the dichotomous rubrics of ‘oral’ and ‘empirical’ history, as Campbell claims I do, is actually the antithesis of my project in *History and Memory*.

Campbell’s misreadings of my book and his inflexible categorizations of evidence lead to misunderstandings of my arguments about the uses of cultural productions as historical sources and about their relationship to other forms of historical data. But there are two additional dimensions to Campbell’s misinterpretation of my book as an ‘oral history’ posed as a criticism and corrective to ‘empirical historians’ that are relevant here. The first is that Campbell does not mention the precise ways in which *History and Memory* engages existing scholarship on enslavement in Africa; the second is that Campbell suggests my work is dismissive of the scholarship and methodologies of colleagues. The first proposition is misleading; the second, incorrect.

In his review essay, Campbell ignores my specific observations about existing studies on slavery and the slave-trade: that scholars have not significantly explored the process of enslavement – of making slaves – within Africa. I note, for example, that ‘Comprehensive histories of slavery and the slave trade tend to say little about enslavement, and even specialized studies of African slavery and its associated human commerce are almost universally weak on the process of making slaves’ (p.10). I cite precise works, and the pages to which I refer, noting that ‘enslavement is seldom listed in book indexes, including those of major works in the field’ (p.10, nn.31–2). The reason for this omission, I suggest, is partly that Africans were usually captured in slaving frontiers away from the observation of those who would write about them and partly because new questions need to be asked of existing evidence.

A second issue I discuss in the first chapter of *History and Memory* is an emerging consensus on the primary mode of African enslavement as war. I am skeptical about this widely accepted claim, and I argue my case

with reference to various kinds of available data, including the research of some of the very scholars Campbell claims I indict as 'culprits' (pp.12–23). I cite the work of Walter Rodney, Phyllis Martin, James Searing, Martin Klein, Paul Lovejoy, Joseph Miller, and others, for example, in support of my contention that fewer slaves were generated by the armed conflict of war than has generally been assumed. More recently published work by G. Ugo Nwokeji and others has tended to confirm these conclusions. In *History and Memory*, I formulate intellectual questions raised by my reading of collateral scholarship and discuss my disagreements on particular points, citing those I criticize and adducing my evidence for doing so. This is how historical inquiry works, how new ideas are proposed and tested, and how historiographies develop, change, and are cross-fertilized. *History and Memory* deserves to be judged by the same standards.

Near the beginning of his essay, Campbell cites two sentences from the last chapter of *History and Memory* in which I note that the reluctance of much recent research on slavery and the slave-trade in Africa to engage or employ historical memory restores its historiography to a colonial pattern, a pattern in which the archive was usually privileged over memories and narratives stemming from Africans and in African languages. (This passage, as misinterpreted by Campbell, does not counterpoise 'empirical' and 'oral history'.) Campbell fails both to assess the validity of this claim and to mention my specific observations that while many scholars writing in the 1960s and 1970s significantly employed narratives created by Africans in their own languages in their professional histories of slaving and slave-trading, works on African slavery and slave-trades published during the 1980s and 1990s, contrary to contemporary trends in the study of slavery in the Americas, have relied much more exclusively on European archival sources (pp.38, 279–80). Recent interest in 'memory' and the slave-trade is a response to this development. Rather than addressing the validity of this argument, which is documented and by which I stand, Campbell suggests my assessments and criticisms are disingenuous in and of themselves: I 'indict' 'culprit' colleagues, he writes.

The foregoing misinterpretations of my arguments from the first two paragraphs of Campbell's review are characteristic of his essay as a whole. Campbell centres his criticism at the margins of *History and Memory*, suggesting – without supporting his claims – that *History and Memory* is inconsistent and based on faulty evidence. I had anticipated that a lengthy review of my book in *Slavery & Abolition* would have discussed the salient arguments of *History and Memory*, which are of interest to readers of this journal. But unfortunately, as a result of Campbell's misstatements about *History and Memory*, I must undertake the tedious and unpleasant job of

responding to points raised, and I will do so, as I have above, by frequent reference to the text of my book, where many of the questions Campbell raises are answered. It is a pity that Campbell's criticisms and the responses that follow do not engage the central contentions of my book.

Misinterpreted Sources

I begin where Campbell begins, with what he incorrectly asserts I call 'oral history sources'. First the *Tantara ny Andriana* (hereafter *Tantara*), a set of Malagasy language narratives and manuscripts collected and published by French Jesuit missionary François Callet during the mid-nineteenth century. Contrary to Campbell's characterization of these works as 'oral history' (I do not present them as such), many of the narratives that comprise the sizeable volume were manuscripts in the Malagasy language compiled by literate highlanders between the 1820s and 1860s, when Callet began soliciting, collating, and publishing them. The *Tantara* 'is presented by Larson as a "popular" oral history source', writes Campbell. 'The majority view is different.' But mentioning absolutely nothing about *why* or even *how* I present the *Tantara* as a popular (or, rather, populist) source, Campbell simply restates what he calls the 'majority' arguments as to why it cannot be. Here as elsewhere, Campbell fails to examine the substance and validity of my arguments and simply states his own understanding of the *Tantara* as supposedly authoritative.

Arguments and evidence for reading the *Tantara* as populist are laid out in two parts of the book (pp.35–41, 258–68). Campbell does not inform the reader that both his and my own interpretations are partially based on differing readings of the same work: Alain Delivré's *Histoire des Rois d'Imerina*. Rather, Campbell only states that Delivré proves me wrong. Beyond my explicit arguments about the nature of the *Tantara* as an historical source developed in the parts of my book noted above, *History and Memory* as a whole is a story of the *Tantara* narratives and an argument for their populist character and uses. 'Inasmuch as this history of the origins and transformations of Merina identity and cultural practice examines the generation and uses of *Tantara* narratives through popular politics during the early nineteenth century,' I write on p.41, 'it also is a history of the social production and transformation of the narratives themselves, "a story of the story."' Campbell does not mention this key statement in his review essay nor does he acknowledge that the storyline of the rise of Merina identity that runs through every chapter of the book suggests how narratives that were once spun by courtiers in praise of the founder king were taken up by people in the kingdom's provinces to criticize the court's increasingly authoritarian modes of governance, from

whence their populist nature. My study of the *Tantara* as a set of dynamic narratives with a specific history in the lives and political actions of highland Malagasy over many decades ought to be evaluated on its own terms. Campbell, however, incorrectly claims that most of the stories were the production of one individual, Faralahibemalo, elitist in nature, and removed from everyday life.

The second source that Campbell incorrectly maintains I classify as an 'oral' source is Raombana's *Histoires*. Refuting my supposed argument about Raombana's *Histoires* as 'oral', Campbell writes that Raombana's manuscript history penned in English by a secretary at the royal court is clearly an elite narrative. My response (also relevant for the *Tantara*) is that the social status of an author is not the only measure of or influence upon his writing. What I argue is that Raombana's *Histoires* parallel the popular narratives of the *Tantara* because Raombana and his family were profoundly disaffected with the sovereign (Radama executed Raombana's father, an army officer, following a military defeat) and because Raombana's history drew from the pool of verbal and manuscript literature protesting what highlanders felt were the despotic tendencies of their sovereign. 'When one peels away Raombana's antiroyal rhetoric and examines his work for what it reveals about the economic and social policies of [founder king] Andrianampoinimerina,' I write on p.42,

the *Tantara* and Raombana's manuscripts appear extraordinarily congruous. If these two disparate sets of historical narratives advance differing judgments about the legitimacy of Andrianampoinimerina's rise to power, they both affirm the broad social popularity of his domestic policies.... Even in the memory of individuals like Raombana who spun 'counternarratives' of Andrianampoinimerina, the founder king espoused populist policies, backing them up, if needed, with the application of violence.

I argue, therefore, that Raombana's narratives in both style and purpose joined the *Tantara* as populist chronicles of protest. Of the validity of my evidence and arguments, developed at greater length in the book, Campbell says nothing.

Campbell subsequently refers to a third 'oral' source, the 135 recorded interviews in Malagasy I conducted in the Vakinankaratra region of highland Madagascar and that I describe as 'Malagasy narratives' in the text. These interviews are listed with name of interlocutor, place of interview, and date of recording in the back matter of *History and Memory* (pp.384-8). Campbell suggests in his review that because I am an 'oral' historian I ought to have used these 'oral' sources to a much greater extent than I do (some of the narratives are recordings of individuals reading from

prepared texts, known locally as *cahiers historiques* or *boky manga*). However, as I state explicitly on p.44 of my book, those interviews shed light on local kin group histories and identities but have little to offer on either enslavement or Merina ethnogenesis. As a result, 'they are not extensively employed here', I write. Campbell overlooks this explanation and does not provide it for his readers.

Finishing with 'oral' sources, Campbell moves to missionaries. 'By contrast,' he writes, 'Larson makes far greater use of missionary sources than he does of either Raombana or of his own *Fieldwork Collection*' (no mention of the *Tantara* here, oddly, for Campbell views them as 'oral' sources and I employ them frequently, especially in chapters 5 and 6). Campbell is again wrong, for while Raombana's manuscripts and non-missionary archival sources are cited throughout my chapters, and my fieldwork interviews in two of them, mission sources from the archives of the London Missionary Society (LMS) are restricted largely to chapter 6. The reason for this strategy is that the LMS missionaries arrived in highland Madagascar in 1820, and my book ends in mid-1822. Chapter 6 covers the early 1820s. Mission archives, therefore, are of chronologically limited relevance to *History and Memory*, and they properly belong in chapter 6. Campbell's essay here, consistent with its misinterpretation of my work as 'oral' versus 'empirical' history, suggests to the reader that I purport to champion 'oral history' while actually relying heavily on missionary sources, conceptualized as 'archival'. Campbell is wrong in both his premise and his conclusions.

Campbell next turns to a two-volume work entitled *History of Madagascar* published in London in 1838 under the name of William Ellis. Unlike the LMS archive, *History of Madagascar* contains historical narratives and ethnographic texts that transcend the chronology of the LMS mission in highland Madagascar (1820–36). Campbell discusses this work because I cite it especially in chapter 6 and elsewhere, and he classes it among those missionary sources (as opposed to 'oral' ones) that I employ extensively. Ironically enough, much information in *History of Madagascar* is derived from missionaries' conversations with highland Malagasy, as is a significant proportion of the LMS archival evidence relating to highland history and culture, confounding the supposedly clear-cut categories of 'oral' and 'archival'. A similar pattern characterizes the literary productions of many an early African mission, as has been demonstrated in studies like those by Wyatt MacGaffey, Paul Landau, Tom Beidelman, and Wim van Binsbergen. To push his contention that my 'oral history' actually relies on missionary sources, Campbell states that *History of Madagascar* was written 'by William Ellis', the head of the LMS, who had never been to Madagascar. In composing the book, writes Campbell,

Ellis 'drew on missionary journals, notably those of David Jones and David Griffiths (who worked largely in the orbit of the royal court from the early 1820s) and from a number of secondary sources [unnamed by Campbell]. The only person to check Ellis's manuscript', Campbell continues, 'was LMS missionary Joseph Freeman.' This is a fundamental inaccuracy about an important and lengthy historical source.

The manuscript for *History of Madagascar* was composed by the Madagascar missionaries themselves, in Madagascar, edited and substantially revised by Joseph Freeman in Mauritius, and then transmitted by him as a completed work to London in 1830 for publication. More than a dozen letters written by Madagascar missionaries David Jones, David Griffiths, David Johns, Joseph Freeman, and others, in the archives of the LMS in London, discuss this work and its progress. The Madagascar missionaries entitled their manuscript the 'History of the Protestant Mission'. The work was urged upon the missionaries in a meeting on 15 August 1828 by George Bennet, who visited Madagascar on deputation from the Directors of the LMS. The manuscript was commenced in short order. In late 1828, the missionaries resolved to work collectively on the book on Mondays and Fridays from ten o'clock in the morning to three o'clock in the afternoon.⁸ The 'History of the Protestant Mission' had reached 1,100 pages in manuscript by mid-1829, and a document in the LMS archive lists its (then) 26 chapters.⁹ When Joseph Freeman temporarily departed Antananarivo on 30 September 1829, he was charged by Jones, Griffiths, Johns and the other missionaries to bear the manuscript with him and to prepare it for publication during his stay at Mauritius. In a meeting before Freeman's departure, the missionaries specified 'That in the preface it be stated that the work is the joint contribution of the 4 missionaries, & where the names of the missionaries are occasionally mentioned, it will indicate that such members of the mission are personally acquainted with the facts related.'¹⁰

On 14 June 1830 Freeman wrote to William Orme that 'After many unexpected delays, our "History of the Mission" is at length brought to a close. I have this morning', he continued, 'put in the Title page, & the "finis."¹¹ Once Freeman had dispatched the manuscript to London, however, certain missionaries began to entertain doubts about publishing their collective work immediately, for they realized as months passed that the contents of the book would either conflict with the report of the British Commission of Inquiry into the State of Slavery at Mauritius (1829) or prejudice the chances for success of the LMS mission to highland Madagascar with the new royal administration (King Radama had been succeeded upon his death in mid-1828 by Queen Ranavalona). The latter concern persisted. The new sovereign and her government desired to limit

the autonomy of Europeans in highland Madagascar, including the LMS mission. Joseph Freeman composed several letters to William Ellis, then head of the LMS, seeking desperately to delay publication of the book.¹²

When in 1836 the last of the LMS missionaries were obliged to depart from highland Madagascar, the LMS went forward with the publication. William Ellis's name was affixed to the book in part to protect the identities of its authors, some of whom remained in and about other areas of Madagascar, and in part to promote it, for Ellis was already well known for his widely read *Polynesian Researches* (1829). While some of the Madagascar missionaries were unhappy about additional editing conducted by Ellis in the final stages before publication, Ellis did not himself write the book, he did not compose it from missionary journals, and Freeman did not simply check the manuscript. None of this recounting would be compelling in the current context had not Campbell criticized my use of *History of Madagascar*, implying that I rely on a work written by someone who had never been to Madagascar. I do employ *History of Madagascar*, as do all scholars of this period, including Campbell, who quotes it copiously in his dissertation and articles.

Following his discussion of *History of Madagascar*, Campbell writes that I employ a published source – Leguével de Lacombe's *Voyage à Madagascar et aux îles Comores* – that 'no serious historian of Madagascar has used ... since 1871 when Alfred Grandidier, one of the greatest scholars of Madagascar, exposed [it] as being largely fictitious'. Alfred Grandidier was a colonial historian of considerable energy (and not a few enemies) who in an address before the Société de Géographie de Paris in 1871 alleged that Leguével de Lacombe 'had never left the east coast' of Madagascar to travel inland.¹³ There is no evidence adduced by Grandidier himself or, subsequently by Campbell, to assess the accuracy of Grandidier's statement. Leguével de Lacombe's book describes a series of travels along the east coast of Madagascar, including one to Antananarivo in Madagascar's inland following the main route that Europeans journeying to the centre of the island usually employed, a major artery of commerce well known along the east coast. Grandidier did not claim Leguével de Lacombe's work 'was largely fictitious', as Campbell writes in his essay, but rather that the author had not personally sojourned beyond Madagascar's east coast.

Leguével de Lacombe is cited in eight of the 1,256 notes in *History and Memory*. In two of those notes Leguével de Lacombe is included along with other primary evidence to support my assertions. In four of the notes Leguével de Lacombe is not among the principle sources cited at all, but is referred to secondarily as offering corroborating information (those notes first provide the primary evidence and then include a final sentence of the

form 'See also Leguével de Lacombe'). In the final two notes Leguével de Lacombe is the only authority cited, but his information is backed up by evidence in surrounding paragraphs. In short, I employ Leguével de Lacombe sparingly, and when I do I corroborate his observations with those of his contemporaries. I submit Leguével de Lacombe to the same standards of interlocking evidence as other sources. All this leads to a reflection: is Alfred Grandidier's single unsupported comment sufficient to disqualify Leguével de Lacombe as one among many sources for Malagasy history? My answer is 'no', and Leguével de Lacombe's congruence with other lines of evidence for the same time and place suggests his observations are trustworthy. Apparently Françoise Raison-Jourde and other respected Francophone and Anglophone scholars of Madagascar, who have also employed Leguével de Lacombe as a source, have reached the same conclusions. In short, Grandidier's allegation is worthy of additional inquiry, but Campbell's uncritical and undeveloped invocation of Grandidier to cast doubt on my use of sources is both inadequate and inappropriate.

Diversions

Guided by his assertion that *History and Memory's* key theme is the 'hidden history of women' in 'the land of long hair', Campbell next turns to elements of my interpretations of enslavement, the gender division of labour, and a revolt by women in Imerina. The misinterpretations of *History and Memory* displayed in this second half of the review turn on Campbell's tendency to state the obvious, about which neither of us disagrees, as a counter-argument and to misread the text as a contradiction. Take Campbell's objection to my observation, based upon contemporary missionary sources, that the ratio of women to men across Imerina commonly approached three, four, and sometimes even five to one in the early 1820s, a result of a preference for men in both enslavement and military recruitment (but primarily the latter). Campbell deploys no evidence against this argument, but he casts doubt on it by writing that the demographic and socio-economic impacts of the slave export trade were primarily experienced *outside* of Imerina rather than within it. Perhaps – or perhaps not – but that is another issue altogether, both a complex and a contestable one. Campbell asserts but does not substantiate his claim that the primary demographic impact of enslavement was outside of Imerina. It is unlikely that sex ratios were as skewed outside of Imerina as within it, for example. During successful highland Malagasy military campaigns, opposing warriors were either executed or enslaved, as, too, were women and children. That depopulation was more severe in particular provincial

regions at particular times than in highland Madagascar as a whole is also a debatable proposition for which evidence would need to be adduced. Tens of thousands of highland Malagasy perished of disease and starvation, even on single military campaigns, while thousands of others died of poison ordeals recently studied by Stephen Ellis. Those paying the highest price for the expansion of Imerina (and for the enslavement of coastal people) may well have been common highlanders themselves. But beyond these fascinating and disputable demographic issues raised by Campbell, *History and Memory* is about the communities of Imerina and I do not argue the relative impact of enslavement on different parts of the island. Posed as a counter-argument to throw doubt on my statement about sex ratios in Imerina, Campbell's statements are an interesting diversion in this context and do not address either my argument or my evidence. They are an aside, not a criticism.

Take again Campbell's disapproval of my translation of *tany lava volo*, a phrase employed in the *Tantara* and designating lands not yet conquered and occupied by Andrianampoinimerina (I do not employ the term to designate highland Madagascar as a whole, as Campbell suggests, in ridicule, that I do). I translate this phrase as 'land of long hair,' discussing the symbolism of hair in highland Madagascar, linking my discussion to the work of anthropologist Maurice Bloch on the symbolism of violence in highland Malagasy ritual and haircutting, and why it is persuasive to interpret *tany lava volo* as 'land of long hair'.¹⁴ To this textured cultural discussion, Campbell simply states that 'Larson throughout translates the Malagasy word *volo* as "hair".... However, *volo* can also mean moss, feathers, grass, bamboo (it is a generic word for bamboos) and brush.' To be sure, but not in this context. With his statement of the multiple meanings of *volo*, Campbell suggests that my contextual translation is dubious. Moreover, his proffered counter-translation of *tany lava volo* as 'uncultivated land' and 'land of the tall reeds' is problematic in two respects. The former term I already employ: 'Malagasy refer to uncultivated land as "land of long hair" (*tany lava volo*)', I write on p.178. The latter, though a poor translation for the context in which I discuss issues of violence and conquest, would be an acceptable alternative. The point is that Campbell states the obvious as a counter-argument but does not address the actual argument of the passage in which my translation of *tany lava volo* is found. The implication is that a mistranslation of *volo* leads the argument astray. There is no mistranslation, and the translation adopted confirms the argument.

Campbell accuses me of inconsistency in saying that between 1770 and 1820 some 70,000 slaves were exported from Imerina and that, while the early sources of slaves in this period were communities lying within

Imerina, the slaving frontier moved outward beyond Imerina thereafter. But sources of slaves in different periods are clearly spelled out in *History and Memory* with contemporary evidence, indicating a complex pattern of enslavement and continually shifting frontiers of capture (pp.92–107, 147–56).¹⁵ Specifically, the changing methods of capture and chronological progression of enslavement can be found in the paragraph lead-ins to my detailed studies of each of these stages (pp.92–3, 97, 102, 151). Nowhere do I state that a slave-trade ‘from’ Imerina means all the victims of that commerce were born in highland Madagascar.

Where captives were obtained outside of Imerina, I write explicitly about them passing through that region of the island. After calculating the maximum possible number of highland households directly affected by enslavements, I write on p.118 that ‘this figure overrepresents the reach of the slave trade [in highland Madagascar], for it fails to account for either multiple enslavements afflicting a single household or for individuals captured beyond central Madagascar but funneled through it, which became increasingly common after 1800.’ In fact, in a lengthy passage key to my interpretation of the role of the slave-trade in the rise of King Andrianampoinimerina, I note that slave-traders on Madagascar’s east coast sought unsuccessfully in 1807 to bypass Imerina and purchase slaves directly from their source in the Vakinankaratra, to the south of Imerina’s four central districts (pp.150–56). Captives from highland Malagasy armies of conquest were usually funnelled through Imerina, the highland capital, often remaining in service there for some time before being marched off to the coast for export (this was common also in Africa’s external slave-trades). Campbell does not criticize the substance of my argument or my evidence here, nor does he show specifically wherein an inconsistency exists.

In a related criticism of my discussion of enslavement in highland Madagascar, Campbell writes that two passages in the *Tantara* ‘clearly indicate that most slaves were captured by the Merina in battle or kidnapped from the neighbouring Betsileo region’. I have four responses to this assertion. The first is *where?* Campbell does not cite any passages from the *Tantara*. The second is *when?* Sources of slaves shifted over time, as I discussed above. To which periods does Campbell attribute his uncited passages? My study ends in 1822; the *Tantara* contains memories that extend into the mid-nineteenth century. And as Alain Delivré has shown, the *Tantara* frequently projects recent incidents onto the past. Third, if two uncited passages of the *Tantara* claim Betsileo as an origin for slaves, the *Tantara* as a whole does not. As I demonstrate in detail, the *Tantara* is a compilation of disparate manuscripts and memories referring to various times and places. Fourth, the uncited passages to which Campbell alludes

represent only some of the many sources I consulted. Here, I have privileged contemporary documentation over certain passages in the *Tantara*, published some two generations after the events to which they refer. Without explanation, Campbell chooses to make a privileged claim for portions of a manuscript memorial source published long after the enslavements in question rather than to rely on the journals and writings of the persons actually involved in the enslavements and slave-trading at the time. It is Campbell, not I, who is being cavalier about non-contemporary sources that originate in memory. But all evidence is not equal in every circumstance. I weigh my evidence differently depending on its provenance and dating, the probability of its accuracy, and the preponderance of the data. When it comes to the origins of slaves, contemporary evidence is generally more convincing than memory.

I turn, finally, to Campbell's comments about my handling of the protest of women from Avaradrano, a region to the north of Antananarivo, in April 1822. My treatment of this revolt in the penultimate chapter of *History and Memory* (specifically, pp.240–57) is directly related to the principal argument I forward throughout the book about the origins of Merina identity. In early April 1822, King Radama cut his hair. This action was repeated soon thereafter by men and boys in the army, at the court, and in the missionary schools. Highland Malagasy men, like their women, plaited and braided their long hair in many distinct styles. In response to these developments at the centre of the kingdom, some 5,000 women from Avaradrano, a district to the north, gathered east of Antananarivo and sent a message of protest about the royal and military haircuts to Radama. Angered at the challenge to his authority, Radama crushed the revolt by starving the women into submission and executing their leaders after shaving their heads.

In my text about the revolt, I examine the actions of the women and Radama's responses in multiple and overlapping ways: as protest against excessive military recruitment, as resentment over the recent disenfranchisement of their district at the royal court, as bitterness over the rapidly growing influence of British missionaries and European customs at the court, as protest against increasing political authoritarianism, as shedding light on the important political symbolism of hair and hairdressing in the kingdom, and as infringement on women's rituals of fertility. 'Royal hair shorn of its plaits spoke in manifold ways', I write (p.247). I eschew a single interpretation of causes for the revolt because there is no evidence to suggest that one interpretation is more cogent than all the others. Different actors, for example, tended to espouse dissimilar interpretations of the revolt (missionaries, Radama, the women) and differing renditions of motives and events are provided in sources of

various provenance. I am interested, rather, in the terms and moral languages through which Radama and the women confronted each other in April 1822 as they argued about royal prerogative and ancestral tradition, a point on which the various sources converge. It is the 'rhetoric' or 'discourse' of tradition in the precise form of that debate that connects my argument about the importance of ancestral tradition and royal action to the origins of Merina ethnic identity.

Into this varied and full discussion of the origins of the women's protest and the debate over 'traditional' royal duties and prerogatives as they relate to ethnogenesis, Campbell intervenes with a variety of specific objections, none of which engages the argument offered about the terms of debate between the women and the king and most of which are wrong. Let me summarize his more salient objections and respond to them briefly.

- Campbell objects that I employ a photograph of a non-Merina woman (p.241) to demonstrate, for non-*Malgachisant* readers, what plaited hairstyles were like in highland Madagascar of the nineteenth century, thereby insulting the ethnic group from which the woman in the photograph hailed. Campbell notes that hairstyles varied among Madagascar's ethnic groups. My response: Campbell states the obvious – hairstyles were varied – and I do not share his indignation at the supposed cultural insult. There being no close-up photographs of highland Malagasy women with plaits available to me (photographs from highland Madagascar are first available from the mid-century and few of them show plaits), I employed one of a woman who may have been Bara (an ethnic group to the south of highland Madagascar), and employed it indicating clearly in the caption that she was not from highland Madagascar but that 'her plaits are similar to those sported by men and women in highland Madagascar during the nineteenth century.'
- Campbell asserts that soldiers wore a hairstyle called *sanga*, about which they were proud and in which the entire head was shaven with the exception of a single tuft (the *sanga*). Therefore, he reasons, I could not be correct in writing that shorn hair was generally a 'badge of dishonor'. My response: soldiers' hair was not shaven at all until April 1822, the month in which the narrative of *History and Memory* ends and in which the women of Avaradrano confronted Radama. The *sanga* hairstyle developed only after this, which is why I do not discuss it. Despite Campbell's chronological error, a plausible interpretation of the later-developing *sanga* is that soldiers grew the hair tuft to distinguish themselves visually and symbolically from prisoners and criminals, whose hair was also shorn. The *sanga* tuft was a mark of soldiers'

honour, despite their generally shaven heads. The example of the *sanga*, of course, proves my point that haircutting in Madagascar, as in many historical societies of the world, was a symbol of subordination, emasculation, and disempowerment. Campbell is simply wrong to suggest that hair shaved on command was not a dishonour. Radama shaved the heads of the protesting women shortly before their execution precisely to shame them.

- Campbell writes that the proper interpretation of the cause of the revolt was the resentment by women from Avaradrano at their loss of income from slaving. My response: this is among the several possible and overlapping interpretations of the revolt I propose (see p.247 in which I link disenfranchisement of Avaradrano district in general to the ending of the slave-trade and to the loss of slaving income discussed in pp.222–30). Campbell is comfortable with a single causation; I am not, for beyond the fact that a single causation cannot be proved, there were multiple tensions and perceptions that simultaneously structured the relationship between the Avaradrano women and the king.
- Campbell claims I have mistranslated ‘three’ parts as ‘four’ parts in a passage about a particular female hairdo and that I do not cite my source. My response: two sources are cited, the *Tantara* and anthropologist Maurice Bloch. Campbell is correct that the *Tantara* indicates hair was parted in three sections. Bloch, however, writes that he observed it being parted in four.

Conclusion

In his review essay, Campbell ignores the key arguments of my book in representing *History and Memory* as a ‘secret history of women’ in ‘the land of long hair’. The title of his review essay – ‘Larceny in the Highlands of Madagascar’ – matches neither Campbell’s arguments nor, of course, those of *History and Memory* (to what theft does Campbell refer?). Without either specifying my arguments or examining the evidence on which they are based, Campbell offers my criticisms of existing literature as *prima facie* evidence of error. The pages of Campbell’s review essay pack a multitude of objections to my book, most of which I have answered here. Campbell moves swiftly from one objection to the next without pausing to reflect on them or to provide actual counter-evidence. Most objections are therefore left hanging. In many cases, Campbell proposes diversions rather than counter-arguments. Most importantly, Campbell gets his facts wrong on nearly every point he makes about *History and Memory*. In the end, the proof of *History and Memory* as both a history of highland Malagasy communities in the age of

enslavement and as an intervention into key debates about enslavement and slave-trading in Africa is in its pages. I encourage those who have taken an interest in the attention that *History and Memory* has garnered to read the book and judge for themselves.

NOTES

1. Portsmouth, N.H., USA: Heinemann; Oxford, England: James Currey; Cape Town, South Africa: David Philip, 2000. I would like to thank Ned Alpers, Jennifer Cole, Stephen Ellis, Jonathon Glassman, Walter Hawthorne, Michael Johnson, Peter Limb, Philip Morgan, Solofo Randrianja, Gabrielle Spiegel, and others for reading and commenting on drafts of this rejoinder.
2. Campbell has published articles on demography, labour, slavery, slave-trading, and the economy in Madagascar during the nineteenth century.
3. The statement was an editorial lead-in to Campbell's H-Net review.
4. <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/volume.cgi?action=year&sort=author&year=2001>.
5. Volume 23, Number 1, April 2002, pp.137–46. I was not informed by the editors of their intent to reprint the H-Net essay.
6. Balanced and positive reviews of *History and Memory* have been published in the *American Historical Review*, the *Journal of African History*, the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, the *Australian Review of African Studies*, the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies*, *Human Rights Quarterly*, *African Affairs*, and *Choice*. The author of the *Choice* review writes that 'This is not just a fine history of the Merina and 19th-century Madagascar; it may be one of the most crucial works of the past 50 years in the field.'
7. In his review, Campbell objects to my use of 'highland Madagascar' to refer to the area of the four central districts of the 'Merina' kingdom. Beyond offering an explicit definition of 'highland Madagascar' and 'highlanders' in my preface (p.xv), I employ the terms to avoid anachronistically using the ethnonym 'Merina', which, as I argue in the book, only came into its first uses in the closing years of the period covered in *History and Memory*. By contrast, Campbell in his essay assumes a static highland identity by writing about 'the Merina' during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
8. Extracts from the Missionary Minute Book, 5 December 1828, LMS Madagascar Incoming Letters, Box 3, Folder 2, Jacket C, Special Collections, Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London (hereafter in the form LMS 3/2/C).
9. 'Prospectus of the History of the Protestant Mission', no date, LMS 3/2/A.
10. 'Extracts from the Missionary Minute Book', 11 September 1829, LMS 3/3/A.
11. Freeman to William Orme, Port Louis (Mauritius), 14 June 1830, LMS 3/3/B.
12. Freeman to William Alers Hankey, Cape Town, 23 November 1830, LMS 3/4/C; Freeman to Ellis, Antananarivo, 22 June 1832, LMS 4/2/D; Freeman to Ellis, Amparibe (Antananarivo), 20 August 1832, LMS 4/3/B; Freeman to Ellis, Antananarivo, 20 February 1833, LMS 4/4/A; Freeman to Ellis, Antananarivo, 9 December 1833, LMS 4/4/C; Freeman to Ellis, Antananarivo, 27 February 1834, LMS 5/1/B; Johns, Freeman & Canham to Ellis, Antananarivo, 23 March 1834, LMS 5/1/B.
13. The address was later published as 'Madagascar', *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris, August 1871), pp.81–108. Grandidier's comment in question is found on p.82.
14. Although I was not born in Madagascar, I lived there for 18 years as a child before leaving for university studies in the United States. I learned Malagasy as a child, and have been using the language professionally in my research ever since, conducting interviews in Malagasy without a translator or research assistant and reading nineteenth-century vernacular texts in the original (not in translation).



15. See also Pier M. Larson, 'A Census of Slaves Exported from Central Madagascar to the Mascarenes Between 1769 and 1820', in Rakoto Ignace (ed.), *L'Esclavage à Madagascar: aspects historiques et résurgences contemporaines* (Antananarivo: Institut de Civilisations, Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, 1997), pp.131–145; Pier M. Larson, 'The Origins of Malagasy Arriving at Mauritius and Réunion, 1770–1820: Expanding the History of Mascarene Slavery', in Vijayalakshmi Teelock and Edward Alpers (eds.), *History, Memory and Identity* (Port Louis, Mauritius: University of Mauritius, 2001), pp.195–236.

