instruments and intermediaries at royal courts are mentioned in the Sunjata epic as well as in Ibn Battuta (fourteenth century), while earlier written sources do not mention them. Thus Tamari incorrectly develops the idea that the royal court of Mali is one of possibly three centers of origin for all West African griots. The way these “casted people” have spread over West Africa is explained by an outdated method: similarity in terminology is used to demonstrate not only cultural relations but even historical processes. However, when an ethnic group borrows a word, for instance griot, this doesn’t necessarily imply an “invasion” of the griot-phenomenon or of griots. Linguistic data are mistakenly treated with models derived from the study of the history of languages. Moreover, the author often blends these data with traditions that represent “casted people” as “newcomers.” Thus she does not take into account the fact that Mande groups often represent themselves as “newcomers” in order express their prestige. In sum, Tamari’s models are as unidirectional and monocausal as those used in diffusionism—as well as in present-day Mande etiological legends.

The book is based on a dissertation, and the text seems not to have been subject to much revision. The author cites hardly any work published after 1980, thus excluding the insights gained in Mande studies in the past decades (among them an important volume on nyamakalaw to which she herself contributed, Status and Identity, edited by David Conrad and Barbara Frank). As a result, she ignores the idea that identities are context-bound and relational, and that sources about status reflect different discourses. The sizable appendix did not allay my discomfort on this subject. For the author social diversity is a twentieth-century phenomenon; the past is treated as a monolithic whole. This view of the past may explain the author’s choice of the term “caste” instead of “status group” or “status category,” a choice that could have devastating effects on the projected second volume in which she plans a comparison with other “societies with castes.”

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M. Alpha Bah. Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone: A Case History of Twentieth-Century Migration and Settlement among the Kissi of Koindu. New York Peter Lang, 1998 x + 191 pp Appendixes Maps Photographs Bibliography Index $40.95 Cloth

M. Alpha Bah’s excellent case study of the Fulbe presence in Sierra Leone gives us an interesting perspective from which to view the history of this part of the continent. Furthermore, this history highlights several social and political dilemmas that have played and are playing an important role in the construction of West African societies. The task he sets for himself is “to evaluate the impact of Fulbe migration and settlement on the general development
The author presents the history of the Fulbe in Sierra Leone in five chapters. In the first, he discusses the early migration of the Fulbe. He shows that migration, or better, mobility, is a very natural process for the Fulbe who roamed the area with their cattle looking for pastures. Other important forces behind their mobility were the jhads (in this case the jihad of Futa Jallon), the spread of Islam, and commerce (the caravan trade). In an appendix, Bah gives a good overview of the literature dealing with Fulbe origin and migration in the area. Abundant as this literature is, it is striking that the topic has received so little attention from scholars.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the division of Kissiland under colonial rule, and with the long history of Fulbe migration into Sierra Leone and its relation to the spread of Islam. The migration to Koindu proper appears to have been indirect, through Freetown. It started well before the colonial period and continued into the twentieth century. The first Fulbe settlers paved the way for others to follow. A few among them were responsible for the spread of Islam in the town. With the increase in trade in the region, Fulbe migration also increased.

Chapters 4 and 5 offer insights into the way the Fulbe established themselves economically and socially in Koindu town. Here the focus is on twentieth-century history, especially colonial policies, the development of trade, and the introduction of European manufactured goods. At the same time, colonial policies that restricted movement across borders limited Fulbe room for maneuver; eventually leading to the creation of an illegal circuit in which the Fulbe were involved. More generally, though, the European presence played an essential role in the commercial development of Koindu town and the financing of schools, mosques, and a hospital. Although the Fulbe community was divided, it was able nevertheless to unite when necessary against enemies such as the Mandingoes. It is clear from Bah's account that the Fulbe became a very rich group in Koindu town (and elsewhere in Sierra Leone) but that this position did not translate into political power. Essentially, the Fulbe remained strangers in Sierra Leone, without rights of citizenship.

To analyze this aspect of Fulbe integration in Sierra Leone, Bah invokes the concept of the stranger as developed by Shack and Skinner (1979). Despite their long presence in the country, Fulbe are still regarded as strangers or foreigners by most Sierra Leoneans and by the government. This raises important questions for understanding the history of West Africa: why do some migrating groups succeed in integrating while others do not? And how does this color their historical and future development? These are important questions, particularly with regard to the position of Fulbe in West African society, and they can only be answered through comparison between various regions. Bah himself does not succeed in answering them. He does relate the stranger position of the Fulbe to their economic position and com-
petition with other groups, but that alone is not convincing. Other groups have also been very successful but have achieved a different position. Bah, then, poses the problem powerfully in his book but leaves it to others to elaborate the theme through comparative research.

The book is based on very thorough fieldwork in the period 1978–82 (examples of oral interviews are given in appendix C), long before the current problems in Sierra Leone. It is a pity, however, that Bah did not integrate more of his primary material into his text. The book would have gained in focus and in clarity if the spotlight had been more on the Fulbe and their history and on some individual cases. The larger historical developments that dominate the book overshadow the interesting theme of this specific migration of the Fulbe. This also makes the division between the chapters unclear at points and leads to overlap in content. At the same time, one wishes for more attention to other Fulbe migrants in Sierra Leone such as rural migrants, who are now totally missing from Bah’s story.

It is very sad to read in the afterword that the town of Koindu has been totally destroyed and that the inhabitants have fled in the wake of Sankoh’s Revolutionary United Front. What has the civil war meant for the Fulbe who are strangers in this society but who have played such an important role in its development? The question is especially pressing because President Momoh, who was sympathetic toward the Fulbe, was overthrown in the coup d’etat of 1992.

Fulbe Presence in Sierra Leone will be of interest to specialists in African history and anthropology, as well as others concerned with the formation of ethnic identity in Africa. In addition, it suggests topics for further research that are crucial to the understanding of present-day Africa.

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In Exchanging Our Country Marks, Michael Gomez offers a fascinating analysis of the cultural transformations of 450,000 Africans of diverse backgrounds into an equally heterogeneous population of African Americans. The process of becoming African American was for all practical purposes complete by 1830. Second and third generation creoles dominated the population, and the legal close of the Atlantic slave trade in 1808 curtailed the presence of slaves brought directly from Africa. Antebellum slaves had exchanged African ethnic identities for American racial ones, a passage they themselves defined. When captives from many different cultures sought