Rejoinder
Monsieur James Steel Thayer
James S. Thayer

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I was startled to see that Cahiers d'Études africaines has printed Professor Christopher Fyfe's intemperate response to my article.

Professor Fyfe takes me to task for not acknowledging that he does now consider social stratification in Creole society. This is disingenuous, inasmuch as he has spent most of his career ignoring such social divisions and has, instead, propagated the stereotypical view of Creoles which I outlined in my paper. However, I am willing to take his conversion at face value, and I am pleased to see that he is following the lead of other, better historians, notably John Peterson and David Skinner, in examining Creole society as a diverse and stratified culture with its own unique blend of European and African elements rather than as an elite class of Europeanized Africans.

I regret that my straightforward disagreement with his (formerly) skewed and one-sided portrayal of Creole society is regarded by Fyfe as envious or spiteful. As far as his own works or those of Professor Wyse are concerned, it cannot be denied that while they may feign to discuss the complexity and diversity of Creole culture and society, their focus remains steadfastly on the elite of Creole society, which they see as the essential defining feature of Sierra Leone Creoles. Fyfe is so eager to offer a rodomontade for his own works that he neglects to point out his responsibility, along with others like Arthur Porter or the anthropologist Abner Cohen, for this one-sided and one-dimensional view of Creole culture.

There was only one substantive criticism offered by Professor Fyfe to my paper. He maintains that because the village Creoles form a cohesive group, run the villages, etc., they thus conform to the stereotype presented by older scholars such as Fyfe. The whole point of my article, and particularly of my discussion of ethnic relations with the Loko, is that: "I found the situation, on the ethnographic level, to be both more complex and more subtle" (p. 223, emphasis added). If Fyfe wishes to dispute that, then so be it, but before he delivers a jeremiad, he ought at least to read the article carefully and discuss the real points that I make throughout.

Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, 1993.
