local Maori political situations by reference to political and genealogical histories. To make some sense of what the Maori response might have been, she attempts to construct a landscape drawn from archaeological records and evidence available from other visiting crews, with these broad descriptions of pre-European New Zealand, presented through the intellectual world of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, showing the frameworks used by explorers at the time to interpret the world.

Lest this sound overly tedious, it is not; the book is carefully detailed with interesting narratives of events, people, contacts, and the vicissitudes of human nature. A flowing narrative style is sustained throughout with the book moving along crisply to the finale of du Fresne's death and the notorious vengeance visited on the supposed perpetrators. A benefit of Salmond's study is the revealing of another history that nonetheless remains ill-defined, given that encounters with explorers were then largely incidental to the continuing nature of Maori being (temporal and spiritual), interaction, and survival that would find its way into tribal tradition.

In the end, Salmond is compelled to rely on an overwhelming weight of evidence from European crews for her accounts of the first meetings between the Maori and Pakeha worlds. Perhaps, given her framework, that was all Salmond was able to do, or indeed set out to do. "Two Worlds [is] an experimental essay in construing an adequate scholarship of the beginnings of New Zealand's shared history," writes Salmond (432), before offering a concluding chant from Eruera Stirling of Ngati Porou, a chant of unity with very broad application.

Particular Maori memories of those encounters are, however, fascinating to read, containing as they do echoes of encounter and contact, a part of the Maori past. We should not overly weight nor expect that these, presented within a contact studies framework, can ever represent a total approach to the Maori past. Such an approach must begin with the tribal histories that have so far been at the periphery.

DANNY KEENAN
Massey University


Geoffrey White's analysis of the manner in which the Cheke Holo of Santa Isabel in the Solomon Islands use their historical narratives to construct their history is a thoroughly intelligent book. Its argument, although not in itself completely novel, persuades through the clarity with which it encompasses, interrelates, and contextualizes extensive and complex data drawn from written documents and ethnographic encounters. Interested as much in transformations of affect as in changes in structure, White pursues his subject "from the vantage point of reflexive selves" (4): he is concerned
not only with Marshall Sahlins’s “structures of the conjuncture” (Islands of History, University of Chicago Press, 1985, xiv), but, importantly, with conjectures about the conjunctures. His field research among contemporary Cheke Holo allows him to learn both what they make of their pasts and why they make of them what they do—why they find their histories satisfying, convincing, salutary, worthy of conveying.

This, simply put, is White’s argument: through telling stories and enacting dramas about the past—especially about their conversion to Christianity—Cheke Holo work and rework their identities, constituting and reconstituting their social realities. Sometimes these narratives are volunteered as biographies of relatives; sometimes they are presented in speeches as official histories to verify political claims; sometimes they are sung as odes to powerful chiefs; sometimes they are performed as dramas, wherein the Christian conversion is reenacted with Cheke Holo in the roles of the first missionaries. In all cases, these narratives are a “mode of self-representation that is also constitutive of social relations. Where such recollection is enacted in collective, even ritualized practices of remembrance, past events become history as they are enshrined in socially produced narratives” (241).

The narratives, in other words, build both personal understandings and sociopolitical contexts, particularly in the wake of what was a disorienting and disruptive colonial intrusion.

Significantly, many of the stories are set at the turn of the century during occasions of first contact, when heroic, heathen, cannibal, and warrior ancestors are said to have become “Christian chiefs” by recognizing the superior power of Christian mana. White not only analyzes these narratives in their own terms, but also contrasts them with missionary accounts of the same events. He shows that Cheke Holo stories differ significantly from European accounts in that the former credit indigenous people—chiefs and other ancestors of those telling the stories—as the “agents of transformation” (180). European missionaries are not rendered ineffectual in the stories, but are subsidiary. Thus the Cheke Holo, “contending with problems of fragmentation inherent in the colonial experience” (47), tell conversion narratives of continuity and transformation to make the past their own.

Chiefs—defined broadly—figure mightily in many of these narratives, and White writes interestingly about why this is so. The Melanesian Mission, which Christianized the Cheke Holo, had a chief-oriented conversion policy that worked because chiefs had long mediated “the [shifting] boundaries of community that constitute the collective ‘we’, differentiating ‘inside and outside’ ” (71). That chiefs, in local idiom, “opened” their communities to Christianity is seen, hence, as a traditional prescience. The history of conversion among the Cheke Holo is told, therefore, as stories of chiefs triumphant—stories that satisfy emotionally because they “recenter the process of change within localized histories of person and place” (246).

But the chiefs who embody this history of conversion have not remained statically triumphant. At
least partly through the stories told about them, they, too, have been reconstituted throughout the postcontact Cheke Holo past. White demonstrates significant alterations in the meaning and operation of chiefs between the era of conversion—before the colonial government began to vie with the church for power and influence—and the present era—subsequent to national independence. Significantly, each reconstitution was also a revitalization of customary practice (kastom), a relocation of the importance of indigenous powers and meanings in a changing contemporary world.

Thus White explains the installation of Bishop Dudley Tuti as “paramount chief,” in this present era, in terms of the “importance of tradition or kastom in formulating a postcolonial political system” (213). Unusual as descendant of the first Christian chiefs, as Christian bishop, and as Western-educated world-traveler, Tuti synthesized the past and the present in his persona. Analyzing one of Tuti’s speeches, White writes: “Tuti here draws with apparent ease from concepts of both kastom and Christianity to construct images of shared identity, with the ‘new way’ providing a kind of tempering or countervailing influence on kastom, selectively implementing desired aspects of tradition in the moral ideas of the day. The possibility of reconciling these often oppositional facets of identity is, I suggest, an important basis for the socioemotional appeal of the paramount chief idea today” (236). Tuti, therefore, embodies what conversion narratives express: the past made meaningfully and movingly present. Impressed as I am with White’s accomplishment, I do have several minor questions and concerns. He states that stories about the past are a “universal vehicle for self-definition” (5, emphasis mine), but I wonder whether this is true for those Melanesians who, it has been reported, so readily accept new lives for old—for those who do not seem to view the past as connected to the present in a linear, causal sequence. In other words, would his argument be more accurately limited to those who have already accepted the temporality of the Christian claim that “in the beginning there was the Word”?

Possibly reflecting my cynical temperament, I also find his analysis perhaps a bit romantic: the narratives seem to work almost too well in resolving Cheke Holo cognitive and emotional dissonance. Moreover, I wonder whether the socioemotional appeal of the narratives is as general among Cheke Holo as White claims. Since most of his data come from men of middle to late-middle age, I would like to know more, for instance, about Cheke Holo gender relations. Do inmarrying women, for instance, tell or accept the same stories of chiefly mediations? Do they have a narrative tradition of their own?

Finally, I wish he had ethnographically embodied this socioemotional appeal more completely: White convinces better than he conveys. Nonetheless, the convincing is an impressive achievement, not the least because it is managed without a trace of (ultimately) self-aggrandizing, obstructionist prose. The book is wonderfully written: one leaves it wishing all
groups had ethnographers as lucid and as concerned with getting things right.

DEBORAH GEWERTZ
Amherst College


From 1897 until 1916 people were indentured from Indian cities to work on European-owned sugar plantations in Fiji, a British crown colony in the South Pacific. Most chose to stay on after their contracts expired and their numbers were soon supplemented by a few thousand free settlers. Today the Indians and the indigenous Fijians each comprise nearly 50 percent of the population of independent Fiji.

Kelly presents an interesting new perspective on the Indians' responses to European rule and on the development of political divisions among themselves in the early decades of this century. He views colonialism as a hegemonic discourse of racial superiority and dominance with its own grammatical and dialogic forms. It is features of discourse, he maintains, that "enable agency and practice" (22–23). Colonialist discourse provokes its opposite as the colonized combat it with their own cultural resources. Hinduism with its imagery of good and evil, virtue and pollution, empowered a countercolonial discourse that helped bring about the end of the indenture system. The evils of Europeans were likened to demons, the oppressors and tormentors of the devout and pure; the indenture experience itself was represented as a replay of "Rama's banishment," an epic of pollution and atrocity.

Abuse of Indian women by European overseers was a recurring source of grievance. A particular instance in which the woman resisted and took action to redeem her honor was publicized widely in Fiji and India. The image of a Hindu woman defending her virtue was quickly put into service as a metaphor for political action and its necessity. Indeed, the Fiji Indians' experience "helped develop the devotional imagery of Indian nationalist politics, including its use of the Ramayan as a vast political metaphor" (64).

The issues of female sexuality and sexual morality became crucial in defining Indian virtue and social worth in counterpoint to European racialism. Their importance was reinforced in an acrimonious rivalry that developed as Indians began to rebuild Hinduism in Fiji. Reformist Arya Samajists, upwardly mobile and bent on "modernization," rejected much of the sexual imagery in the sacred texts and some old prohibitions such as that against the remarriage of widows. Despite the virulent challenges, Sanatanist (orthodox) Hindus achieved the widest popular influence. Kelly argues that this dispute, arising partly from the countercolonial discourse, was responsible for undermining the beginnings of Indian political unity.

Kelly develops his case with verve and eloquence. Yet, as a reader familiar with Fiji's colonial history, I sometimes