by Pamela J Stewart and Andrew Strathern nicely frame the discussion of landscapes with additional ethnographic material and a useful theoretical overview, allowing them to stand alone as pedagogically useful chapters. One minor concern is the stated focus on landscapes, history, and memory. While landscapes certainly provoke discussion of history and memory, the latter is not uniformly sustained throughout the volume. Memory is implied by the idea of landscapes, as relating humanity to pasts, provoking and cajoling histories into the present. It is, therefore, implicit in each of the case studies. However, the work of memory is rarely problematized. Half of the articles do discuss the role of memory in creating place (Guo, Harper, O’Hanlon and Frankland, Smith, and Strang), though even here the meaning of memory is often assumed. At times, history and memory seem like glosses for one another, and not distinct analytical tools. In the introduction to the volume as well, landscape is the overwhelming focus of the theoretical overview, while the work of memory is given a much shorter discussion. The introduction and contributions to this volume are not any less significant because of the fact that the volume does not really live up to the billing of landscape, memory, and history.

Landscapes, Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives would be a useful volume for cultural geographers, anthropologists, and historians interested in landscapes. The articles are quite accessible and provide evocative and important case studies. More importantly, by providing a broad range of ethnographic locations, the collection provides a useful resource for breaking up our tendency toward regionalism. It is applicable for students of political ecology and postcolonial studies, and would be a useful text for upper-level undergraduate and graduate courses on those subjects.

JAMON HALVAKSZ
Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury

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Indo-Fijians of the second girmit (labor migration from India) diaspora, now twice-migrants, have ensured that the histories, cultures, and futures of Indians in Fiji are well known, and Brij V Lal, the editor and contributor of a prologue and five chapters to Bittersweet, has been most responsible for the considerable depth of research and publication on the Indo-Fijian experience. Bittersweet adds an important body of literature to our understanding of the individual and collective memories of Fiji’s Indo-Fijian population. Although many of Bittersweet’s authors live outside Fiji, reminiscences of mostly rural life in Fiji in the mid and late twentieth century form the central link among all the essays.

Surprisingly, as many authors note, a consistent feature of these stories is
the close and diverse relationships that existed between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. In this sense Bittersweet adds as much to the general history of Fiji as it does specifically to the Indo-Fijian community’s part in that history. As individual memories of this era are fading, and collective memory has been muddled by conscious political social memory, a wide audience can now be grateful that those who lived in or carried out research in Fiji in this era have found in Bittersweet a platform to tell of their experiences. Not all Bittersweet’s authors are of Indo-Fijian descent, but all have a story to tell about Fiji.

There are many fascinating and illuminating insights in Bittersweet. Seemingly offhand comments and short analytical asides are scattered among longer pieces. These one-line references to people and events, incidental comments on trends, and occasional summative statements remind the reader that Fiji has changed dramatically in the thirty years since the colonial era ended. Memories of school days, marriages, rites of passage, festivals, girmits, coups, and community events are contextualized by the post-independence struggles of Fiji as a nation, and more so by post-coup competitiveness and ethnic divisions in the last fifteen years. Bittersweet’s authors are aware of national politics and major historical events, but the stories consistently privilege the personal and local above the national. They do challenge established histories of Fiji’s recent past by stressing how ordinary rural life was characterized by varying levels of intimate and dependent relationships between Fijians and Indo-Fijians and between Indo-Fijians and the European colonial enclave that administered the colony and ran CSR (the Colonial Sugar Refinery). But overwhelmingly and repeatedly Bittersweet is a rose-colored story of schoolmates, friends, fellow soccer players, former teachers, revered religious leaders, and the annual cycle of Indo-Fijian religious and community life. It distinguishes between Hindu and Muslim Fiji but more so between life experiences as they were lived differently in Dilkusha, Dreketi, Flagstaff, Nausori, and Votualevu.

The twenty-four chapters (one in Fiji Hindi) are arranged randomly, and personal reminiscences are intermixed with straight historical pieces like those by Jacqui Leckie on the Qawa epidemic, Mohit Prasad on the early popularity of multiethnic soccer, Christine Weir on schooling, John Kelly on Indo-Fijian festivals as a form of colonial protest, John Connell and Sushma Raj on migrating Indo-Fijians in Sydney, as well as Brij Lal’s excellent opening essay, which succinctly surveys the girmit period. The Indo-Fijian diaspora in Australia, the United States, and New Zealand is also covered in three essays. Vijay Naidu’s essay “Searching” (chapter 23) comments on recent events and should have been placed after Lal’s opening survey as a guide to the themes tackled personally by the following authors.

In between these useful academic accounts, Bittersweet offers its real gems—Vijay Mishra’s account of the elusive community of “Dilkusha,” Praveen and Saras Chandra’s quest
for the truth behind their great-grandfather’s criminal conviction in 1913, Brij Lal’s search for stories about his former teacher Mr Sita Ram, Ahmed Ali’s reflections on the arrival and survival of Muslims in Fiji, Fiji Times editor Vijendra Kumar’s coup experiences, and Annie Sutton’s tales of schoolgirl life at St John’s in Levuka in the 1980s.

The other half of Fiji is revealed in these essays and I say that purposefully. Through the essay on his experiences as an ophthalmic surgeon working on diabetes-induced blindness in Fiji, Malcolm Tester reminds us that visitors to (and readers about) Fiji usually see only through a narrow window, with Indo-Fijians as laborers in fields, in hotel lobbies, and behind duty-free-store counters. My first visit was in 1971 and I have continued to visit regularly across the last thirty years, in addition to leading five undergraduate university fieldwork excursions to Fiji. I am guilty of the narrow definition of Fiji that Tester refers to, of ignoring the multiethnic composition of Fiji. It was not until 2003 that the fieldwork learning experience, which claimed to introduce Australian students to the full spectrum of Fijian life, included extended homestays with Indo-Fijian families.

The 2003 undergraduate fieldwork I led highlighted two Fijis, but also the fact that outside Suva there is more harmony and accommodation than tension and competitiveness. What Bittersweet does brilliantly is reveal the normality of mid-century multiethnic life in Fiji, with many Indo-Fijians and Fijians working, living, studying, mourning, playing, and praying together. This message is not blazoned in subtitles or subheadings but is subtly revealed through the ordinary language of personal recollection and reminiscence. It offers a salutary lesson to readers that for much of the twentieth century there was a duality in Fiji, difference not between Fijians and Indo-Fijians, but between the politicized modernity of Suva and the accommodation and respect of rural Fiji. The coups of 1987 and 2000 emphasized the former and took conflict to rural areas, and this change in Fiji is revealed in most essayists’ memories of days gone by.

There is much to gain by reading Bittersweet as an academic history of the Indo-Fijian experience, but it may also be read purely to enjoy the stories of individuals not often allowed onto the pages of scholarly works. There are many insights. Mohit Prasad suggests a fascinating link between schooling, family identities, the building of soccer pitches, soccer competitions, and the drinking of yagona (Fijian ceremonial drink, also known as kava, made from the pepper plant). Brij Lal suggests in “Masterji” that the Indo-Fijian emphasis on education was not driven by desire to enter into the cash economy but sought as a refuge from the grim reality and poverty of rural life. Susanna Trnka argues that defining villages or settlements (goan) with a geographic or political boundary is a limiting conceptualization, and she suggests that Indo-Fijians had strong, even fiercely defended community identities even when physically it appeared they were
located in dispersed dwellings and lacked a nodal point or central “official” leadership. Padma Lal notes the hard labor and anger of widowed women cane farmers and predicts Indo-Fijian leaseholders in the sugar industry face a dismal and uncertain future. These aspects of contemporary Fiji need further research.

The prologue promises to analyze “memory,” but this historiographical opportunity is lost, and the anecdotes, reminiscences, myths, and confused narratives typical of a collection when people are asked to “remember when . . .” are not placed in a theoretical context, perhaps leaving the stage open for a follow-up work. An additional reflective chapter, separate from the individual stories of the past, could have made this collection a valuable contribution to the historical study of memory, a task now left to readers and the next wave of Fiji researchers who will use some of Bittersweet’s essays as a primary resource. There are also several errors that editing should have corrected, such as different spellings for puja (Indian blessing ceremony) and the double printing of passages (on page 148).

This is an important collection. It makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Fiji’s recent past. It is well written and covers diverse and little known aspects of Fiji’s past, and hopefully will reach a wider audience than the Indo-Fijian diaspora, Indo-Fijians in Fiji, and anthropologists and historians of Fiji. There is an expanding market in writing about history and memory, and Bittersweet demonstrates that memory is perhaps more than just the latest, trendy access path to understanding the past.

MAX QUANCHI
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

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In Pacific Places, Pacific Histories, a distinguished lineup of seventeen Oceanic scholars contribute essays in honor of Robert C Kiste, an esteemed intellectual and advocate of Pacific Islands and Islanders. This compilation of essays performs a richly deserved gesture of appreciation to a rare person whose vast constellation of friendships, collaborations, and beneficiaries extends spatially across the farthest reaches of the Pacific horizon and temporally to past, present, and future generations of native Islanders and Island scholars.

In shaping Pacific Places, Pacific Histories, editor Brij V Lal invited select scholars to reflect on ways in which their grounding in a specific Oceanic place has informed their research. The theme of place is simple yet profound, as Michael Rynkiewich conveys in his reflection, “Place is identity, place is community, and place is life itself” (324). This volume rewards readers with intimate, often moving accounts that provide insight into the dense dynamics of encountering, experiencing, and knowing a place and its people.