

Race Against Time. By Atholl Anderson. Hocken Lecture 1990. Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin, 1991. 46 pp. NZ price: \$10.00.

THIS SMALL VOLUME aims to document and explain the development of the 'mixed-race' Maori-Pakeha population in southern New Zealand during the nineteenth century. It is based on June McDougall's unpublished research, which is used, but not reviewed, and described simply as containing 'the names and basic genealogical data, to the extent that it was available, about all Europeans and their families, including Maori and mixed-race partners and children, who visited or lived in Otago and Southland prior to 1848' (p.3 and note 14). McDougall's data was collated by Anderson under six headings: original men and original women, first generation, second generation, males and females. The patterns which emerged are presented in four sections, illustrated by 18 line drawings. In short, this is a thoroughly well-organized and illustrated essay.

The central conclusion of the volume is that 'Post-European southern Maori history was ... one of largely unremarked racial and cultural assimilation' (p.31). Southern Maori underwent 'rapid assimilation towards the Pakeha population and into European culture'. This occurred through 'inter-breeding' and 'hybridisation'. The offspring were typically brought up in 'European settlements', and thus assimilated.

I am, however, concerned by the conceptual repertoire which frames the analysis and its conclusions. The essay begins with the notion of 'demographic Maori', as separate from 'marae Maori'. This polarity is used to express the distinction between those who have some Maori descent or 'blood' but do not behave as Maori, and others who are Maori by descent and culture (p.1). The practice of Maori culture is said to be difficult to define but 'a family ability in the language and the use of traditional Maori forms of burial may be two useful criteria' (p.31). Hence culture, which is a crucial term in this essay and others, is reduced to a small set of especially indicative practices. Treating culture so minimally enables Anderson to polarize Maori, as New Zealand governments have done for decades.

At best this division simply obscures the fact that Maori culture, like others, is complex, interactive and changing over time. At worst it is the Achille's heel of *Race Against Time*, in that the construction of a bi-polarity allows the author to treat historical processes as interactions between separate entities — surely a false view of the past in much of New Zealand.

Interaction between the discrete 'racial' entities is tracked through the use of Olde Fashioned Biologisms. These litter the text. More than that they form and inform the analysis. Race is the most common and fundamental of them. Not surprisingly, it is used 'without any scientific precision in terms of either genetic or phenotypical traits', but instead 'in the common sense to imply prominent differences in the physical appearance of populations that were once geographically separate'. However, there are lapses in this uncommon sense. For instance, the term Pakeha is used as a gloss to refer to people of very different appearances grouped together. The real people being aggregated included: two AmerIndians, an American Black, a Tahitian, a part-Aboriginal (Figure 1). In order of frequency the 'Europeans' being discussed comprised English, Scots, Irish, Australians and Americans, with Iberians being also noticeable.

Predictably, Anderson (pp.1-2) resolves not to use the concept of ethnic group, claiming, in one of the more remarkable phrases in the essay, that it is 'merely a collocation used in covert synonymy for "race" which is avoided on moral and political grounds'. I would make two points: first, race and ethnic group are not synonymous and it is absurd to suggest that they are. Second, moral and political grounds have a lot going

for them — but clarity of analysis is crucial, and on that score perfunctory treatment of these issues is fatal.

Race Against Time continues with an arithmetic of 'interbreeding'; the term 'half-caste' is used in the belief that it is 'useful and historically appropriate' (p.2), and as an 'arithmetic measure of descent in which the caste of the offspring is always the average of that of the parents' (p.2). The last sentence begs the question: how useful is the concept of caste in this context? 'Historically appropriate' may refer to the fact that the term half-caste was used by some observers cited in the text but I wonder whether they attributed the same meanings to it that Anderson maintains. This issue is relevant when half-caste children are distinguished from quarter-caste offspring. I do doubt the accuracy of the distinction and suggest that the term children of mixed descent might be about as specific as the circumstances allow, particularly when children are likely to have been borne to the earliest sealers in the Foveaux Strait, although no records of them exist. 'Half-caste' may often have been an omnibus term, referring to a broader range of mixtures than is allowed in *Race Against Time*. It may also have been a common pejorative, now converted for the purposes of this arithmetic history into a sequence of neat Mendelian fractions. The intellectual and social history of these term is germane if they are to be re-used, even if 'simply in the common sense'.

The second aspect of this work I wish to take issue with follows from its very limited engagement with historical demography, family reconstitution methods, and inferred or observed demographic parameters for broadly comparable populations (see Bibliography pp.44-46; and the 'principal model assumptions' in Brian Nevin's Appendix, p.39). These omissions combine to create in *Race Against Time* a lack of well-considered comparative cases and methodological insight. A number of demographic parameters are inferred. These include; 'the age of first partners of original ['European'] men at about the beginning of their relationships' (pp.6-7), marriage preferences (p.9, Figure 8), 'family' sizes, combined mean rate of birth and others. The results are unbelievable, given the nature of the sources used and the absence of rigorous methodology. However, once the parameters are calculated they must then be explained. For instance, low birth rates for Maori women are recognized as a continuation of an inferred pre-European pattern. Such explanations are frail indeed. The low birth rate of nineteenth-century southern Maori women could be more evident than real, given the paucity of the records. Moreover, if real it could have been effected by the age/sex structure of the population, changes in age-specific fertility, or a number of other factors known to apply in demographics of contact.

Nevertheless, I enjoyed *Race Against Time* and value it for the attempt it makes to reconstruct and understand the demographic history of southern New Zealand. However, without the use of the serious devices of modern demographic analysis and a sensible range of anthropological concepts, processes of some importance may remain undetected, while some of what is seen may be illusory.

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