

*Dragons on the Long White Cloud: The Making of Chinese New Zealanders.* By Manying Ip. Tandem Press, North Shore City, 1996. 168 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-908884-64-8.

THE STRENGTH of this book lies primarily in the interviews which form the basis around which Manying Ip constructs her narrative portrait of Chinese New Zealanders. She had the good sense to allow the people she interviewed to tell their own stories. These are engaging people, most of whom are third or fourth generation New Zealanders, and their stories are worth reading. They convey a variety of experiences and reveal considerable diversity of opinion in their responses to particular issues. There is no single Chinese New Zealand voice that emerges from this book. But the voices that do emerge are unmistakably those of New Zealanders, albeit New Zealanders for whom Chinese culture and Chinese familial traditions have been of central importance.

In her earlier book, *Home Away From Home*, Manying Ip allowed the stories told by the women she had interviewed to stand alone, with each occupying a separate chapter. Her approach here is different. The chapters are thematic and in each she includes excerpts from a number of different interviews. For instance, several of the early chapters deal with aspects of family life, and it is in these that we are introduced to the various people who will be relating their stories throughout the book. We learn of their experiences in childhood, their relationships with parents and grandparents, and their views on romance and marriage. Other chapters explore topics such as education, employment and discrimination, and the book ends with a consideration of how these Chinese New Zealanders have responded to the new wave of Asian migration since the mid-1980s. The stories they tell are enlivened by the fine photographs that are scattered throughout the text.

Those who come to the book seeking a litany of complaint over how an ethnic minority has been forced to suffer the prejudice and persecution of the majority will be disappointed. That is not the story these people wish to tell. Most remember their childhood with considerable affection and all seem to have had little trouble negotiating the distinctions between life in a Chinese family and participation in the wider New Zealand community. Indeed, it seems that a rich family life provided these people with the sense of security and confidence that enabled them to pursue active social lives. Boys seem to have begun to venture out beyond the family earlier than girls, particularly those boys who became involved in sport, but that would not have been peculiar to Chinese New Zealanders in the 1940s and 1950s. Education and employment offered all access to that wider world. There were nine girls in the Kwok family, and of those interviewed one became actively involved in the family business, another encountered socialism at university, joined the New Zealand Communist Party and became an energetic social worker, while the third pursued an active career in local politics, eventually becoming Deputy Mayor of Lower Hutt. With most of these families we see the familiar transition: the older generations working hard in labouring and service occupations in order to ensure that their children would enjoy the benefits of university education and go on to professional careers.

The increase in Asian immigration in recent years has had a considerable effect on the lives of these Chinese New Zealanders. Most enjoy the greater profile given to aspects of Asian culture in the wider community, yet all are affected by communal tension and increased discrimination. Many did not wish to discuss the issue, but of those who did the story told by Pauline Wong is perhaps the most disturbing. She had lived and worked happily in Whangarei for over 40 years, yet found herself accosted in the street one day by an elderly man waving a stick. He claimed that as *kaumatua* he had *mana* and shouted at her to go 'home' to China. Manying Ip reminds us that the antagonism felt by some

Maori towards Chinese is not new. In the late 1920s Sir Apirana Ngata conducted a campaign for racial purity directed against the Chinese, believing that mixed marriages would lead to the 'racial contamination and moral degradation of the Maori people' (p.109). This helps put in context recent statements by people such as Ranginui Walker and Winston Peters. It is an important issue and it is pleasing to see that it receives some attention here.

There are a frustrating number of minor typographical and grammatical errors throughout the book, errors that could easily have been avoided with more careful editing. There are also times when Ip's interpretations of an interviewee's comments jar or are misleading. To call a centralized bureaucratic state like late imperial China 'feudal' (p.48) strips the term of any real analytical value it has for the historian. But these are minor quibbles. It is a valuable book, in which we encounter the experiences and opinions of a group of people from whom we have heard too little. I wonder, though, where the transcripts of the interviews are held. No indication of their location is given in the text. It is probable that the role of the Chinese in New Zealand's history will receive increasing attention in coming years, not least because of the stimulus provided by Manying Ip's own work. It would be useful to have such a valuable resource made available to others.

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*All Our Own Work: New Zealand's Folk Art.* By Richard Wolfe. Viking, Auckland, 1997. 152 pp. NZ price: \$36.95. ISBN 0-670-87551-1.

IN THIS AGE of global mass consumption of manufactured goods the making something-out-of-nothing ethic is a diminishing part of our culture. Watching television is now the most popular leisure pastime; the leisure skills of the folk artist have largely disappeared. Most folk art items made by previous generations have also disappeared. Richard Wolfe's book is probably just in time, to rescue, document, and discuss the social history of New Zealand's folk art.

Wolfe's work examines both the context and practice of the home-made, hand-made, quirky, idiosyncratic folk object tradition in New Zealand. He tracks the origins of hand-made craft objects to the recycling practices of the whalers, who used whale vertebra for chairs and stools, and whale teeth for scrimshaw; the make-do ethic of the earliest settlers; and the kauri gum objects that emerged from the gum fields. Their makers' processes of retrieval and hockism — creating hybrid objects from materials to hand — boldly express individualism, while symbolizing the remoteness of the makers, geographically and economically, from purchasable resources.

Once the settlers had permanent shelter they could turn their energies to creating home comforts: hearthrugs from rags, kauri breadboards and humble accessories for every day use. Abundant raw materials enabled a huge range of crafts to develop. Many of these objects were not made from recycled scraps, but from timber off-cuts and left-over wool, and followed local fashions. Wolfe tells us of a craze for making tea cosies in the 1880s and 1890s, when commercial patterns became available. The Auckland Museum collection includes one in the shape of a Maori whare.

Unlike cottage industries, folk art is not about making saleable articles, but about