– BOOK REVIEW –

BEING MĀORI-CHINESE: MIXED IDENTITIES

by Manying Ip.
Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2008.
255pp. RRP $44.99 ISBN 978-1-86940-399-7

Reviewed by
Dr Kate Bagnall, independent scholar

Manying Ip makes it clear from the outset that *Being Māori-Chinese: Mixed Identities* is a very personal book. It begins with an explanation of her own inspiration for the project – the emergence of tantalising snippets about Māori-Chinese families that kept popping up in her wider research on New Zealand Chinese – and her own process of locating subjects and conducting interviews. Ip tells of being warned by a 'well-meaning elder' from Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa about the difficulties she would encounter in her project, due to the sensitivity of the subject matter and the reticence that Māori-Chinese as a group would have towards sharing in-depth information with her. 'Are you sure you wish to pursue this study on Māori-Chinese relations? I don't think people will tell you much', he said.

The publication of *Being Māori-Chinese* is, then, an acknowledgement of Ip's reputation as a researcher and community advocate. It is only through mutual trust that she has been given access to the personal stories of the seven Māori-Chinese families whose experiences make up the heart of the book. Each chapter focuses on a particular family and presents an intimate journey into the family culture and individual identities of family members. The book is further testament to the courage and generosity of her subjects, who shared memories and thoughts on many aspects of their lives. Their generosity is particularly moving because, as Ip states, 'those memories involve a struggle against social discrimination and, in many cases, family disapproval'.

From the late nineteenth century, Māori and Chinese met in common geographical spaces, where they shared livelihoods like market gardening and, both being marginalised from white New Zealand society, other activities as well. Many harmonious mixed communities existed and the intimate relation-

ships that developed in them ranged from casual sexual liaisons to longer-term cohabitation and formal marriages. Relationships typically involved an older Chinese man and a young Māori woman. White responses to Māori-Chinese relationships were predictably unfavourable; more surprising perhaps were the ideas of so-called 'thoughtful Māori' such as Apirana Ngata, Minister of Native Affairs, who in 1938 lamented the creation of a 'hybrid race' that would not only destroy the family and national life of the Māori, but of the national life of the whole country.

The families that feature in *Being Māori-Chinese* were formed between the 1920s and the 1970s. The first chapter tells the story of market gardener Joe Kum Chee and his wife Alice-Jean Kiriona Williams and their descendants. After about four decades together, and raising seven sons and three daughters, they finally legally married in 1981 – after the death of Joe Kum Chee's Chinese wife. The final chapter tells of the family of Simon Tuang and Olive Ngarenoa, who met when Simon came to New Zeland from his native Malaysia to study in the early 1970s. Chapters in between show the differences of background and experiences that make up Māori-Chinese lives. This diversity provides interesting perspectives on changes to both New Zealand and Chinese society, to patterns of migration, and to social dynamics which have affected Māori, Chinese and Pākehā responses to mixed race families and individuals over the course of the twentieth century.

In her Introduction, Ip draws out certain common themes that emerge from the seven family stories she is about to tell – the challenges and impediments to mixed relationships, the question of 'why marry a Chinese', the impact of Eurocentrism, the influence of religion and of family ties, and the apparent confirmation of certain sterotypes about the 'hard-working Chinese' and the 'easy-going Māori'. Revisiting these themes after reading the life stories themselves, however, it seemed that the differences between these families – in time, in geography, in social background – made the commonalities more incidental than exemplary. How useful is it, for example, in the section on motivations for Māori women to marry Chinese men, to place 'the dire poverty and insecurity that the Māori community was in around the 1920s' as a reason in one paragraph, and the opinions of modern, educated Māori women in the next?

Being Māori-Chinese tells of lives tied very closely to the social and historical conditions of the nation of New Zealand – but the book's interest stretches beyond national boundaries. In the field of Chinese diaspora studies, the presence of intermarriage with local women in, for example, southeast Asia is an acknowledged and accepted part of the story of Chinese migration to the

region. Further south, however, it has only been much more recently that intimate relations between Chinese migrants and both indigenous and settler populations have been considered more seriously. Considering the potential wider interest in the stories told in *Being Māori-Chinese*, it would have been helpful to include a glossary of the Māori terms for those, like myself, who are less familiar with Māori language and culture. A map of New Zealand would also have been a useful addition.

Family stories, such as those told in *Being Māori-Chinese*, are at the core of the growing body of Australasian scholarship that explores mixed race lives, families and communities. Such stories counter the assumptions of previous generations that interracial encounters were either unthinkable due to race prejudice or occurred under unsavoury conditions that were detrimental to one or both parties. Ip is to be commended for encouraging the Māori-Chinese families included in the book to share their experiences, and also for carefully structuring each chapter so that her voice takes a secondary place to those of family members themselves. As she notes in her Introduction, the book explores lives that 'have been largely overlooked in the formal historical and sociological discourse of New Zealand'. This book is an important step in inserting Māori-Chinese into the story of New Zealand's past, present and future.

– BOOK REVIEW –

SETTLERS: NEW ZEALAND IMMIGRANTS FROM ENGLAND, IRELAND & SCOTLAND 1800–1945

by Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn
Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2008
221 pp. RRP $39.99 ISBN 978 1 86940 401 7

Reviewed by
Michael Belgrave, Massey University, Albany

Settlers is the final output of a 1990s Foundation for Research, Science and Technology funded project, which provided a statistical overview of the profile of British and Irish migrants to New Zealand prior to 1945. This study is a tribute to the outpouring of enthusiasm for the new social history championed by Bill Oliver in the late 1960s, with its challenge to go forth and enumerate. Phillips and his team of historians scoured death registers, passenger lists, rolls of the Waikato immigration scheme and the Waikato militias, among many lists of assisted migrants, to provide a profile of the origins of waves of British and Irish migrants to New Zealand. Historians have limited access to substantial funds from the foundation or from its poorer sister the Marsden Fund. *Settlers* shows that the money was well spent and as a result of this long and fruitful research project we have a very detailed and richer understanding of the origins of British and Irish migrants. However, *Setters* also illustrates some of the challenges of the new social history, its labour-intensive demands and the difficulties of using all the graphs, tables and schedules to make a major contribution to larger historiographical debates. *Settlers* may also demonstrate some inflexibility in the relationship between large-scale funding organisations, little experienced in historical questions and historical research, and the demands of New Zealand historiography.

Part of the problem is the deliberate and laudable attempt by Phillips and Hearn to make this book crossover from a narrow academic interest in its quantitative results to a popular audience now fascinated with family history and regular viewers of the BBC's *Who do you think you are?*. Readers are even advised, if they are 'not concerned with historiography' to start at chapter

two, where the real history begins. To achieve readability and audience, the statistical results are leavened with a wide range of biographical detail from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* and family histories collected by the New Zealand Society of Genealogists. This makes a much more popular book, although some of this biographical material involves the lives of many already well-known figures in New Zealand history, and they can sometimes add little in explaining the statistical data. That Dove-Myer Robinson, John Allam, W.T. Anderton, Frederick Young and Bill Jordan all came from England and became involved in politics tells us little of why Auckland became the most 'English of the English' of New Zealand provinces. And similar lists of twentieth century politicians could have been compiled from Scotland or Ireland.

There are now few surprises in the profile that has emerged. Overall the English predominated, the Scots are important, and the Irish tagged along behind. There are variations over where people end up and there are variations by decades in the different origins of migrants. More important, although already well known, are the persistence of substantially varied county origins of the English migrants. A major gap is the lack of discussion of post 1900 migrants, the group clustered between 1900 and 1930, when British migration became much more directed to the Dominions and the Empire rather than to the United States as had been the pattern in the nineteenth century. Their stories are overwhelmed by those of their nineteenth century predecessors. Given the predominance of British and Irish settlers in New Zealand's demographic past, it is surprising that the project did not include all migrants to New Zealand, or at least all of those from Europe. The focus on British and Irish migrants alone also distorts the story, particularly as Australia is considered primarily as a conduit for migrants passing through, rather than as part of a broader Australasian system of migration.

Despite the major contribution the study makes to understanding the patterns of British and Irish migration to New Zealand, its contribution to developing New Zealand's historiography should have had a similar high priority. *Settlers* argues that we have failed to understand the complexity of these waves of migration, because historians preferred New Zealand's to be a frontier history, one where a new society emerged from the New Zealand environment, and where there was a prevailing view that New Zealand's cultural origins were British and homogeneous, and therefore required little further investigation. Phillips and Hearn challenge both of these assumptions and argue that the specific patterns of New Zealand's British and Irish migration contributed significantly to the development of New Zealand's social and cultural makeup. Several major themes in New Zealand's cultural history, Arcadian values and

the belief that New Zealanders have a 'jack of all trades' tradition of dexterity and flexibility, are attributed to places of origin rather than frontier experience. Far from seeing New Zealand as a homogeneous colony, the variety of accents and dialects, the intermixing of different counties and even villages and the interaction of English, Scottish and Irish migrants present a multicultural past, with much more in common with New Zealand's present than that of the mid-twentieth-century. Only, it is argued, after the New Zealand born became more prominent, New Zealand children experienced a common educational system and an active and centralised state did a homogeneous national community emerge.

These are interesting contentions but they also raise more questions than they answer. Can the development of New Zealand society be explained by ignoring Maori completely? Social status and class are also almost completely ignored as explanatory forces. This preoccupation with place of origin seems at odds with the more political agendas behind the new social history of the 1970s, which sought to explain social change through the interaction and contribution of different sources of power, status and identity. *Settlers* has provided an invaluable source of data and will in the future be a rich field for historical debate: it just hasn't quite got there yet.

STOPOVER

by Bruce Connew with Brij V. Lal
Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2007.
RRP $40. Unpaged. ISBN: 9780864735577

Reviewed by
Jacqueline Leckie, University of Otago.

Holding this beautiful little clothbound book and then turning each page is like slowly walking around a stunning photographic exhibition of Fiji. But this is a side of Fiji rarely shown. It is not that of beautiful beaches or smiling Natives aimed at tourist consumption. Nor does it depict the media-frenzied Fiji of crisis and coup. Instead, most of these images were those taken by Bruce Connew of a cane farming community, specifically a cane-cutting gang, in the small Indo-Fijian settlement of Vatiyaka. This was during Connew's seven stopovers in Fiji between 2000–2003. The theme of stopover, travel, diaspora, identity and place is a web connecting the book's images and an essay by Brij Lal.

The book speaks primarily through Connew's stunning black and white photographs. It is a pity that this quality is broken when some images span two pages (e.g. 2 September 2003, where the image of a family is interrupted by the page break). Connew's style is evocative of the renowned labour realist photographer, Sebastiao Selgado. Connew's image of Salance in 2001 connects with a much earlier photograph by Selgado of a cane-cutter in Cuba.

The book's black and white contrast delivers an initial striking impact but within this are many shades from cloudy grey to shining silver. Such imagery is evocative of readings of Fiji's troubled contemporary history that have too often been simplistically cast in extreme racial binaries. Closer scrutiny has revealed the complexity within these.

Two grainy images of George Speight open the book. In 2000 he instigated Fiji's third coup d'etat and with his followers held the Chaudhry-led coalition as hostages for 56 days. Speight played the race card, pitting indigenous

Fijians against Indo- Fijians although Connew alludes to much deeper machinations within indigenous and other communities, enmeshed within broader economic currents. Connew recollects that when he was asked to 'ironically' photograph indigenous Fijians on Bau Island at a funeral of a paramount chief during day 39 of the 2000 coup:

> there is a smell in the air, on this day of farewell, of unclean affiliations and shifting powers. An unlikely mix of people, here from all over the country, will whisper not a word of the squalor consuming Fiji. (Connew's introduction).

Although these political and economic undercurrents thread through the book, it focuses on the personal. Very little is shown or said about the thousands of Indo- Fijians, who partly because of the economic and political upheavals in Fiji, have moved to other destinations. Instead a set of seven coloured photographs follows the black and white Vatiyaka images. These are family snaps of kin who have relocated to New Zealand, Australia, USA and Canada.

Most Indo-Fijians are, as Connew's captions document, descendants of over 60,000 Indian labourers who under *Girmit* (indenture) established Fiji's sugar cane industry after 1879. They are still considered by many non-Indo-Fijians to be on a 'stopover'. This is despite Fiji's 1997 Constitution securing the inclusive category of Fiji Islander for Fijian citizens. One of the Constitutional Commissioners was Brij Lal. His very personal and moving essay in *Stopover* of Mr Arjun's (Kaka) stopover in Australia evokes the sense of belonging to place and community in Tabia, Vanua Levu.

Lal's essay also connects with the book's sole sepia image of two Indo-Fijian men taken over half a century before Speight's televised images. The narratives behind the former images remain unknown but Connew's book returns us to the importance of place and family. The book provides one of the few visual records of the daily lives of a cane-cutting community during a period of social volatility and movement. The images are enriched by longer than usual captions, accompanied by thumbnail prints, towards the back of the book. I suspect that academics may trawl these for ethnographic insights but the original images need to be first viewed. Consider image 4 August 2001, of a grandfather reaching to close a house shutter. Connew briefly explains that absent from this is another grandson who had been imprisoned in Suva 'after running with the wrong crowd.' After his discharge he was sent back to Vatiyaka, but this was only a stopover as the grandson left. Such themes of impermanence but also belonging and place run through this book.

In a personal communication to me, Lal described his essay as 'factional', a term he applies to lived experience rendered through quasi-fictional device. His essay reiterates our ignorance about the lives of illiterate people such as Mr Arjun, but equally those higher up the colonial hierarchy such as the *kulambar* (the CSR overseers) who also spent much of their lives in remote parts of Fiji. The author encourages a reticent Arjun Kaka to take his first journey out of Vanua Levu and visit family who have emigrated to Sydney after their cane leases were not renewed. Lal summarises this:

> A hundred years ago, our forbears had arrived in Fiji, ordinary folk from rural India, shouldering their little bundles and leaving for some place they had not heard of before but keen to make a new start. A hundred years later, their children and grandchildren are on the move again: the same insecurity, the same anxiety about their fate.

Mr Arjun is unhappy and displaced in Sydney. Lal writes, 'I wished Fijians who were applauding the departure of Indians could see the transparent love an illiterate man like Kaka had for the country.' Mr Arjun longs to return to his village in Fiji where he 'was connected, was part of a living community.' This community, albeit from decades ago and with differing relationships, is rekindled when the author arranges for the old man to visit a CSR refinery and to reconnect with Mr Tom, a retired CSR overseer.

This is a very special and touching book, with superb design by Catherine Griffiths. It offers a visual ethnography with new insights for those familiar with Fiji. It also encourages those unfamiliar with Fiji's complexities to question simplistic representations and learn more about communities where generations have moved from Asia to the Pacific and then on again.

– BOOK REVIEW –

SARI: INDIAN WOMEN AT WORK IN NEW ZEALAND

by Edwina Pio
Wellington: Dunmore Press, 2008.
175 pp. RRP $39.95 ISBN 9781877399329

Reviewed by
Jacqueline Leckie, University of Otago

This beautifully designed book has a contemporary focus, moving on from recent historical publications on Indians in New Zealand. *Sari* explores the world of work and the many identities of women of Indian descent in New Zealand. Edwina Pio reproduces such varied narratives through weaving these into one overarching metaphor of 'sari', to evoke an evolving 'unstitched garment' (p.9), indicative of Indian women's ancient heritage and diverse diasporic heritages in New Zealand. This is primarily a celebratory book of 'Women of the sari': 'The Indian women of New Zealand – quiet, patient, hardworking, ritualistic, spiritual, passionate…' (p.10). I am unsure how this generalisation will be received by women readers of Indian heritage in New Zealand, especially those who do not wear sari. Is 'sari' just a metaphor or signifier of Indian women's many identities in New Zealand? I also found it problematic to connect the themes of cloth (and food that is also prominent in the book) to Indian women's work in New Zealand. Possibly the book could have either specified that it was a collection of narratives of Indian women's lives in New Zealand or an examination of Indian women and work there. 'Sari' is charming and exotic, but to me, the title detracts from the subtitle of the book, 'Indian Women at Work in New Zealand.'

Sari provides important insights into the lives of Indian women in predominately paid work, while chapter seven focuses on voluntary work. The book is divided into eight chapters along with the author's introduction and a preface by New Zealand's first Governor General of Asian descent, Anand Satyanand. The chapters reproduce extensive excerpts from often deeply moving interviews with the author. They open with enticing headings such as, 'Don't fence me in', 'Sweet as', although upon closer examination the rationale behind the chapters is unclear.

The first chapter, 'Guess who is coming to tea', concerns Indian women married to Kiwi men. This chapter also intersperses discussion of nineteenth century Indian settlement in New Zealand. The chapter includes many topics and spans diverse periods. Here and throughout the book 'Kiwi' and 'Pakeha' are conflated and used ambiguously. Pio states that these terms, along with 'European', are used interchangeably to refer to 'whites of European descent.' Conversely she notes that those of Indian descent in New Zealand may identify as Kiwi. Unfortunately the ambiguous use of these terms tends to polarise 'Kiwi' and 'Indian', and does not allow identities such as 'Kiwi Indian' (and similar variations).

A few points may not stand up to historical scrutiny. Pio suggests (p.12): 'It is possible that some of the pioneering Indians in the 19th century were involved in the country trade boats with Maori and over the years became invisible as brown skins merged.' More evidence of this, especially concerning 'country trade boats', is required, particularly if such interaction refers to the nineteenth century. The introduction also states (p.10) that: 'There are stories from Indian women whose great grandfathers jumped ship or came as servants of the British or as military men (*sepoys*) or as seamen (*lascars)*', but the linkage with the Indian women in the book is unclear. Edward Peters is referred to on page 26 as a famous example of an Indian who was absorbed and befriended by Maori, but again, evidence is required of this. Chapter one does finish with a good conclusion on the complexity of mixed marriages and the interpretation of demographic data. It also stresses the constraints on mixed marriages and acceptance within Indian communities in New Zealand.

Chapter two draws on the author's research specialities and is rich with data on women working in dairies, shops and restaurants. It challenges stereotypes of the submissive and unskilled woman in the corner store. An additional reading of the theme of Indian women in family retail and service businesses might address how such positioning has excluded many Indian women from realising educational and occupational ambitions. On page 34 there is an assumption that all Indians lost businesses when these were requisitioned to the New Zealand army during World War II. In fact many Indians in New Zealand retained their businesses and made profits during these years.

The intention of chapter three, titled 'Copper-based karma', was a little unclear. It appeared to address discrimination, but tried to interweave this with concepts of karma or destiny. Such rendering appears contradictory. However an extensive narrative by Vasanti Unka was especially moving.

Chapter four, concerning organisational culture and practices, delivers the promise of stories of 'Fabulous success and subtle racism' (p.12). Chapter five addresses Indian women in the health sector, while chapter six shares more success stories with confident women. *Sari* chooses not to dwell on the 'dark side' of work within family enterprises or in low-income and unrewarding jobs. But chapter seven does expand Indian women's work to include the significant contributions of Indian women in voluntary work.

The concluding chapter entices the reader with 'Mingled Fragrances'. This summarises recent immigration trends in New Zealand and points to future recommendations to achieve 'responsible migration' and 'migrant sustainability.' These are important issues but neither this final chapter, nor the epilogue, draw the book together.

Despite my criticisms, *Sari* offers an important contribution to the literature on Indian women in Aotearoa, especially Indian women and work. Edwina Pio reiterates that 'race and gender do matter and minorities do perceive the workplace differently', perceiving 'more career-related barriers and have a lower self efficacy for coping with them relative to "whites" ' (p.110). She strongly advocates the need for minority and female mentors in the workplace, along with other pragmatic suggestions. *Sari* significantly connects academic research and lesser accessible public documents with a general audience, and especially Indian women, in a pleasing and accessible format. Future publications might consider going past extensive reproduction of ethnic minority women's 'voices' to more comparative analysis.