

‘Drug-besotten, sin-begotten fiends of filth’¹

NEW ZEALANDERS AND THE ORIENTAL OTHER,
1850-1920

A GENTLE BREEZE whispered down the streets of Wellington on the evening of 24 September 1905. Lionel Terry, a tall, blond, blue-eyed, 32-year-old Briton, strode purposefully down Haining Street. Joe Kum Yung, a 68-year-old Cantonese, one leg crippled as a result of a mining accident, shuffled along the footpath. Terry walked up to him, drew a revolver, and fired two shots at point-blank range. Yung collapsed, spilling blood and peanuts onto the footpath. Admitted to Wellington Public Hospital with a bullet through the brain, he died an hour later. Terry, meanwhile, strolled back to the Club Hotel where he chatted over supper with several Members of Parliament. Later that evening he wrote to the Governor, Lord Plunket, justifying the shooting: ‘I will not, under any circumstances whatever, allow my rights and those of my fellow Britons to be jeopardised by alien invaders.’ In order to demonstrate his resolve, declared Terry, ‘I have this evening put a Chinaman to death’.²

Terry’s brief foray into ethnic cleansing illustrates the depths to which racism occasionally descended in the white settler colonies of the British Empire. In Terry’s final solution to the Chinese problem, British racial arrogance reached a bloody nadir. He was found guilty of murder at his trial, and sentenced to hang, but the authorities quickly decided that Terry, insane, should not face the death penalty. He spent most of the rest of his life incarcerated in mental hospitals. What should we make of this incident? Does it epitomize the racism that pervaded New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

Many well-respected, socially prominent New Zealanders shared Terry’s fierce antipathy towards the Chinese. Robert Stout, ex-premier, chancellor of the University of New Zealand and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, announced Terry’s death sentence with reluctance. Involved in the New Zealand Anti-Chinese League since 1895, Stout, too, detested the Chinese.³ So did some ordinary New Zealanders. When Terry escaped from Sunnyside and Seacliff hospitals into the South Island countryside, as he did for weeks at a time, sympathizers hailed him as a people’s hero, and helped him evade

1 Lionel Terry, *The Shadow*, Auckland, 1904, p.28.

2 Frank Tod, *The Making of a Madman: Lionel Terry*, Dunedin, 1977, p.31.

3 *New Zealand Times*, 5 August 1895, p.3.

capture.⁴ Joe Kum Yung was not the only Chinese murdered in early twentieth-century New Zealand. Just over two weeks before Terry struck, thieves robbed and shot dead Ham Sing Tong, a 66-year-old Chinese living alone near Tapanui. A.C. Hanlon defended Thomas Stott and George Bromley, locals accused of the crime. An all-white jury found the two not guilty.⁵

New Zealand historians have seen such incidents as the tip of an iceberg of white prejudice. Immigration policies designed to exclude Chinese culminated in the 1920 Immigration Restriction Amendment Act, which formalized a 'whiter than white' New Zealand policy that lasted until the Second World War. All the above evidence supports recent revisionist scholarship determined to debunk what James Belich depicted as the 'legend' of New Zealand race relations. According to Belich, who has focused mainly on Maori-Pakeha relations, complacent national mythology — the myth of New Zealand as a land of exemplary racial harmony — has prevented us from acknowledging the depth and extent of racism in our past.⁶

Pakeha bigotry has been the primary subject of a great deal of scholarship on the Chinese in New Zealand. But to focus solely on racism leaves too much unexplained. Stimulated by recent writing on the wider Chinese diaspora, we want to move the debate beyond this.⁷ Hostility towards Chinese was an integral part of the colonial nationalism emerging in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century New Zealand, however the nation-builders targeted a variety of groups, not just Chinese. Creating a cohesive, egalitarian community of like-minded citizens required excluding all those — whites as well as non-whites — who stood apart from or threatened to undermine the great colonial experiment.⁸ Similarly, we argue that Chinese should not be portrayed merely as passive victims of white prejudice. They constituted active historical agents. Neither Chinese nor Pakeha behaviour can

4 *Otago Daily Times*, 25 November 1907, p.5; 12 December 1907, p.7; 19 December 1907, p.8.

5 *New Zealand Herald*, 23 November 1905, p.5; *Otago Daily Times*, 22 November 1905, p.2; 25 November 1905, pp.4–5; 28 November 1905, p.5.

6 For 'whiter than white' see Tom Brooking and Rob Rabel, 'Neither British nor Polynesian: A Brief History of New Zealand's Other Immigrants', in Stuart Greif, ed., *Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand: One People, Two Peoples, Many Peoples?*, Palmerston North, 1995, pp.23–49, quotation on p.39; James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*, Auckland, 1986, pp.298–302.

7 See, for instance, Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini, eds, *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism*, London, 1997 and Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Overseas*, Singapore, 1991. Two recent books by Eric Rolls provide a great deal of information about the situation in Australia: see *Sojourners: The Epic Story of China's Centuries-Old Relationship with Australia*, St Lucia, Queensland, 1992; and *Citizens: Continuing the Epic Story of China's Centuries-Old Relationship with Australia*, St Lucia, Queensland, 1996. For an historiographical overview of North American scholarship see Wing Chung Ng, 'Scholarship on Post-World War II Chinese Societies in North America: a Thematic Discussion', in *Chinese America: History and Perspectives*, San Francisco, 1992, pp.177–210.

8 Avner Offer, '"Pacific Rim" Societies: Asian Labour and White Nationalism', in John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder, eds, *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa first assert their nationalities, 1880–1914*, Sydney, 1988, pp.227–47. See also Prasenjit Duara, 'De-constructing the Chinese Nation', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 30, 1993, pp.1–26.

adequately be understood unless we take both sides of the encounter seriously. After placing treatment of Chinese within the context of an emerging colonial nationalism, we re-examine the foundations of nationalist hostility in light of Chinese agency. Finally, we consider the views of those groups who saw a place for Chinese in the new nation, some of whom vigorously opposed the exclusionist policies of the colonial nationalists. Too often these voices have been ignored. Their evidence suggests that modern ideals of building a tolerant, humane and inclusive society have deep roots in our past.

Until recently New Zealand historians have paid little attention to the Chinese, one of the forgotten peoples of our past. William Pember Reeves, arguably our most influential nineteenth-century historian, justified the Liberals' campaign to exclude them as 'aliens and undesirables' in *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*.⁹ Half a century later, Chinese remained almost invisible, mentioned only as objects of white hostility in the general histories of Keith Sinclair and W.H. Oliver.¹⁰ The publication of Ng Bickleen Fong's study of the Chinese in New Zealand in 1959 had little impact on mainstream scholarship. The *Oxford History of New Zealand*, published in 1981, devoted only one paragraph to the Chinese, depicting them simply as victims of Pakeha prejudice.¹¹

Historians ignored the Chinese for three main reasons. First, they constituted a tiny minority numerically, never more than one or two per cent of the total population, proportionally less numerous than in other Pacific Rim settler colonies such as British Columbia, California and Victoria.¹² Secondly, when New Zealand scholars wrote about race, they concentrated on Maori-Pakeha relations. Maori were numerous, relatively powerful, tangata whenua, and played a significant role in national mythology. As recently as 1971 Keith Sinclair, our most influential twentieth-century historian, argued that New Zealand enjoyed better race relations than any other white settler colony in the world.¹³ This flattering self-image of the nation as a world exemplar of racial enlightenment ignored the legislative record on Chinese immigration. Furthermore, New Zealand historians, predominantly left-liberal in politics, preferred not to complicate the myth that the 1890s and 1930s constituted the most progressive and enlightened decades in our past. Few saw any

9 William Pember Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*, Melbourne, 1969 [1902], II, pp.325–64. *The Long White Cloud: Ao Tea Roa*, Auckland, 1973 [1898] scarcely mentions Chinese.

10 Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, rev. ed., London, 1969, p.166; W.H. Oliver, *The Story of New Zealand*, London, 1960, p.154.

11 Ng Bickleen Fong, *The Chinese in New Zealand*, Hong Kong, 1959. Stuart Greif's book, *The Overseas Chinese in New Zealand*, Singapore, 1974, also made little impact. W.H. Oliver with B.R. Williams, eds, *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1981, p.304.

12 In 1874 over 4% of the population of Otago was Chinese-born and in Westland over 6% — see Malcolm McKinnon, ed., *New Zealand Historical Atlas: Ko Papatuanuku e Takoto Nei*, Auckland, 1997, plates 45 and 53.

13 Keith Sinclair, 'Why are Race Relations in New Zealand better than in South Africa, South Australia, or South Dakota?', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 2 (1971), pp.121–7.

significance in the fact that their political heroes — Seddon, Reeves and Stout among the Liberals and Harry Holland, M.J. Savage and other Labour leaders — were ardent sinophobes.¹⁴

The Chinese began to appear more historically significant after the combined shocks of the oil crisis and Britain's entry into the EEC in the early 1970s sent New Zealand scurrying for new markets. As East and Southeast Asian economies boomed in the 1980s and 1990s, the virtues of racial tolerance and multiculturalism commended themselves to élites right round the Pacific Rim. In Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand, governments relaxed previously restrictive immigration policies in the attempt to attract rich Asian businessmen and skilled, educated workers. Scholars, meanwhile, began to probe the historical relations between Chinese and non-Chinese around the Pacific, with the contested issue of immigration attracting most interest.¹⁵

In New Zealand, Chinese intellectuals such as Manying Ip and James Ng sought to remind us that Maori and Pakeha were not the only peoples to make history in this country.¹⁶ Their work followed an international pattern of 'outsider' history which, gathering strength from the 1960s, focused on previously subordinated or marginalized groups. Such histories contested established historical narratives of modern nation-states by highlighting their omissions and exclusions. Although the sterling efforts of Ng and Ip rescued the Chinese as legitimate subjects, few New Zealand historians took much notice. The most recent general history of the country, James Belich's *Making Peoples*, has portrayed New Zealand as the creation of two peoples, Maori and Pakeha, the Chinese receiving one small paragraph in a 500-page book.¹⁷

14 Barry Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave: A Biography of Michael Joseph Savage*, Auckland, 1986, pp. 117–18. Gustafson notes that Savage took a somewhat more moderate attitude toward the Chinese than many other Labour party politicians.

15 Two of the best recent studies of immigration issues are Sean Brawley, *The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America 1919–78*, Sydney, 1995, and Malcolm McKinnon, *Immigrants and Citizens: New Zealanders and Asian Immigration in Historical Context*, Wellington, 1996. From World War II onwards many history thesis writers focused on immigration. See for instance, Francis Porter, 'Chinese Immigration to New Zealand in the Nineteenth Century', MA thesis, University of New Zealand, 1948 and N. Harrison, 'The Formation of White New Zealand: Immigration Policy between the years 1890 and 1907', MA thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1955.

16 Manying Ip, *Home Away From Home: Life Stories of Chinese Women in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1990; 'Chinese New Zealanders, Old Settlers and New Immigrants' in Greif, ed., *Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand*, pp.161–99; and *Dragons on the Long White Cloud: The Making of Chinese New Zealanders*, Auckland, 1996. James Ng, *The Presbyterian Church and the Chinese*, Christchurch, 1987; 'Chinese Goldminers in Otago, New Zealand' in Jan Ryan, ed., *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, New Delhi, 1995, pp.30–44; *Windows on a Chinese Past: How the Cantonese Goldseekers and their Heirs settled in New Zealand* (Volume 1), Dunedin, 1993; *Windows on a Chinese Past: Don's Roll of the Chinese* (Volume 4), Dunedin, 1993; *Windows on a Chinese Past: Round Hill; Alexander Don; Missions; Mixed Marriages; The Opium Evil* (Volume 2), Dunedin, 1995. Volume Three is due for publication in 1999.

17 W.H. Oliver, *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Wellington, 1981, p.304, and James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the end of the Nineteenth Century*, Auckland, 1996, pp.317–18.

Only in recent years in the work of some social historians have the Chinese begun to assume more significance.

Erik Olssen has accorded the Chinese a more important role in our past than any other New Zealand historian. This reflects, in part, their significance in Otago where, during the gold rush of the 1860s, they constituted over 4% of the population. In *A History of Otago* Olssen argued that Chinese immigrants, valued as cheap labour by capitalists and feared by workers for the same reason, catalysed the class consciousness that gripped turn-of-the-century New Zealand. He took the argument a stage further in *Building the New World: Work, Politics and Society in Caversham 1880–1920*, declaring that, although 'insignificant in numbers and socially peripheral', the Chinese played a 'symbolically central' role. The good citizens of Caversham, stereotyping Asians as dirty, depraved and dangerous, turned them into an alien 'other' in relation to whom respectable citizens defined themselves as they built their new world. The Chinese functioned as all-purpose 'scapegoats' upon whom 'skilled and unskilled, Protestant and Catholic, rough and respectable' could vent their fears and frustrations. The 'Oriental Other' thus sustained community 'cohesion' and an 'egalitarian ethos'.¹⁸

We want to go further than this. Colonial nationalism — forging a better Britain in the south Pacific — constitutes the crucial context within which to make sense not only of sinophobia but of a wide range of phenomena which historians have generally neglected to link. The mainstream, determined to build a virtuous, prosperous, cohesive and harmonious society in the Antipodes, radically 'othered' a variety of groups, white as well as non-white: non-Asian 'coloured races', separatist Maori, Jews, Irish Catholics, fundamentalist Protestants and 'degenerate' whites. New Zealanders' capacity for radical othering transcended racial boundaries more often than historians have acknowledged. Constructing communal enemies helped an otherwise bondless, atomized society to cohere.¹⁹

Between 1879 and 1920 politicians introduced into the House of Representatives no fewer than 20 bills designed to restrict Chinese immigration or economic activity. Discriminatory legislation, beginning with the 1881 Chinese Immigrants Act, coincided, ironically, with a decline in the Chinese population, which continued for the next 40 years.²⁰ Burgeoning colonial nationalism, not an influx of Chinese, generated this increasingly restrictive legislation. Liberal and radical politicians led the campaign, though they encountered considerable opposition, especially in the Legislative Council. But the widening of the franchise, and the popularity of the Liberal

18 Erik Olssen, *A History of Otago*, Dunedin, 1984, pp.105–6; *Building the New World: Work Politics and Society in Caversham 1880–1920*, Auckland, 1996, pp.44–45.

19 Keith Sinclair underestimated the strength of colonial nationalism in the 1890s — see *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity*, Wellington, 1986, passim.

20 Charles P. Sedgwick, 'The Politics of Survival: A Social History of the Chinese in New Zealand', PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 1982, pp.647–8 lists all the bills introduced into the House of Representatives concerning Chinese immigration between 1879 and 1944. Chinese population statistics between 1867 and 1976 appear on p.636.

party's land and labour policies, meant this opposition was ultimately unsuccessful. This should not lead us to assume, however, that the anti-Chinese programme enjoyed widespread popular support.

Historians have familiarized us with the range of stereotypes that politicians constructed in order to exclude the Chinese. During the immigration debates of the mid-1890s, for example, Liberal and radical politicians demonized the 'yellow peril' in much the same way as their counterparts in other white settler colonies were doing. Chinese men, their critics alleged, huddled together in filthy hovels, gambling, smoking opium and 'tampering' with innocent young white girls at every opportunity. According to one radical member of the Legislative Council, Chinese market gardeners poured urine on 'nearly full-grown' vegetables before selling them to unsuspecting European customers; one fruiterer allegedly ripened bananas in his 'privy'. The Chinese worked for next to nothing, forcing wages down, and destroying the standard of living of white workers.²¹

Political opponents of the Chinese saw them as a threat to their great colonial experiment. William Whitehouse Collins, for example, a Christchurch politician and freethinker, told the House of Representatives in 1896 that he had always opposed Chinese immigration because they took no part in national or municipal affairs. Pursuing an 'isolated existence', they wanted only to 'make money' and 'get away' from New Zealand as quickly as possible.²² Raking in 'all the money they can to send away to their own country' constituted their sole reason for being in New Zealand, agreed a member of the Legislative Council; lacking 'social responsibility', the Chinese ought to be excluded from our 'national family circle'.²³ The Chinese 'remain a distinctly separate people amongst us' and 'take no interest in our institutions', echoed Richard Meredith.²⁴ 'They come like an army of locusts, and get all they possibly can' before returning to China, fumed the fiery radical A.W. Hogg, leaving nothing behind in New Zealand, not even the bones of their dead.²⁵

According to the Wellington radical John Rigg, admitting any more Chinese into the country would 'paralyse all our efforts at social reform' and destroy forever 'our endeavours to make the colony one to be looked up to and respected among the nations of the world'.²⁶ If 'this is going to be a colony that we may be proud of', declared leading Liberal William Montgomery, 'we should fearlessly say we do not want Chinamen to be here at all'.²⁷ 'New Zealand for the New Zealanders,' trumpeted James Kerr a century before Winston Peters.²⁸

21 New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (NZPD), 1895, 91, pp.283-4 (Rigg).

22 *ibid.*, 1896, 94, pp.314-15.

23 *ibid.*, 1896, 92, p.448 (Jones).

24 *ibid.*, 1896, 93, p.469 (Meredith).

25 *ibid.*, 1896, 94, p.312.

26 *ibid.*, 1895, 91, p.284; *ibid.*, 1896, 92, p.373.

27 *ibid.*, 1896, 92, p.380.

28 *ibid.*, pp. 384-5.

Radical colonial nationalists argued that Asians posed such a serious threat that New Zealand ought to forge its own, independent policy on immigration, in defiance of Britain. An Anglo-Japanese treaty signed in 1894 enabled Japanese to enter and reside in Britain and perhaps even its dominions.²⁹ Conservatives and moderates in both the House of Representatives and the Legislative Council argued that, in order to avoid offending both Britain and Japan, legislation aimed at excluding Chinese should except Japanese. Seddon, undaunted, declared that New Zealand would refuse to be bound by British policy. William Earnshaw, a Dunedin radical, congratulated the premier; if maintaining 'our Anglo-Saxon standard of civilisation' in New Zealand required 'cutting the painter' to Britain, then so be it.³⁰ W.C. Walker applauded his colleagues' determination to blaze a trail independent of the 'Old Country'. By welcoming 'all foreign populations' indiscriminately, Britain had turned herself into an 'asylum for the world', which Walker thought 'deplorable'. She had neglected 'the interests of her own people', particularly her workers. New Zealanders, by contrast, building their own 'young country', had not only a 'right' but a 'duty' to 'choose our own methods' of 'encouraging the well-being of our people'.³¹

Walker believed that building a better Britain entailed excluding every 'degraded class' of immigrant: not only coloured races but 'low-class Jews' from Eastern Europe as well.³² Seddon and some others agreed about excluding Jews.³³ As such anti-semitism suggests, colonial nationalists across New Zealand's narrow political spectrum saw a host of enemies threatening their ideal society. 'Plain Bill' Earnshaw considered 'Assyrian hawkers' a 'greater curse' to the country than the Chinese, but both races, along with Japanese and 'negroes', ought to be excluded.³⁴ Robert Stout demanded 'a law against negroes and Kaffirs' as well as Chinese.³⁵ According to Dr Alfred Kingcome Newman, a Wellington businessman and conservative politician, the Chinese constituted a mere 'fraction' of the 'great growing evil' of 'undesirable persons' threatening New Zealand: the Japanese, 'Austrian gumdiggers' (Dalmatians), the 'diseased', 'lunatics', and all those 'unable to look after themselves' should also be kept out.³⁶ In order to 'keep this country foremost in the ranks of civilisation', declared William Pember Reeves, 'the scum of the earth' must be kept out.³⁷

Sinophobia in turn-of-the-century New Zealand should not be considered unique, *sui generis*, a thing apart. Anti-Chinese activists often supported the

29 Article I of the treaty allowed Japanese to travel and reside in Britain. Article XIX stated that no provisions of the treaty applied to the dominions unless Britain specifically notified Japan of this within two years of ratification of the treaty. The treaty was ratified in August 1894.

30 NZPD, 1896, 93, p.467.

31 *ibid.*, 1896, 92, pp.451–2.

32 *ibid.*, p.452.

33 *ibid.*, p.258.

34 *ibid.*, p.255.

35 *ibid.*

36 *ibid.*, p.254.

37 *New Zealand Times*, 5 August 1895, p.3.

early twentieth-century eugenics movement. Eugenists aimed to encourage healthy, able and upright persons to breed, and to discourage reproduction of the 'unfit'. Stout, ex-premier and a prominent member of the White Race League, was one of New Zealand's leading eugenists. He saw 'degenerates' as a threat to the ideal society he had devoted his life to building. The state must prevent any 'mental defective' from landing in New Zealand, he told the 1924 Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, and permanently incarcerate locally born defectives in order to prevent them from harming themselves and the productive members of society.³⁸ Lionel Terry justified his execution of Joe Kum Yung on similar grounds, arguing that he had compassionately chosen to end the life of an aged Chinese cripple for whom life had become an intolerable burden and who had no place in a healthy society.

Colonial nationalism constitutes the crucial wider context within which an array of phenomena often treated as discrete and unrelated — White New Zealand, the eugenics movement, the state's harsh treatment of Maori prophets such as Te Whiti and Rua Kenana, its suspicion of Irish Catholics, and its antagonism toward fundamentalist Protestants and other conscientious objectors during the First World War — may comprehensively be understood. Idealistic politicians, determined to build a better society than anywhere else in the world, marginalized, excluded, or crushed all those they perceived as threatening the unity, cohesion, and prosperity of 'God's own country'. The ideal society faced enemies within as well as without. For the sake of the nation, for the common good, all must be removed, peaceably if possible, forcibly if necessary.

Few scholars of the Chinese in New Zealand have examined white sinophobia in adequate depth. The literature seldom gets beyond condemning mainstream racism as irrational if not psychopathological — Victorian Pakeha are these days in danger of becoming the modern scholar's incomprehensible, diabolical Other. Furthermore, too many modern studies suffer from an unnecessarily Eurocentric focus. They not only attribute more significance to the European actors than the evidence warrants, but also pay insufficient attention to the Chinese side of the encounter. For instance, Belich proclaims that Chinese 'were not allowed to breed'. This is simply incorrect. It not only attributes more power and malevolence to the state than it actually exercised, but also implies that Chinese themselves had no control over their own sexual and reproductive lives. Similarly, Miles Fairburn argues that the numerical insignificance of New Zealand's ethnic minorities rendered their cultural heritage 'much less influential' than in other settler societies. In the Chinese case, 'Pakeha prejudice' prevented their 'assimilation'. This exaggerates Pakeha agency and underestimates the strength of ethnic cultural traditions in shaping Chinese lives within New Zealand.³⁹ We want to ask a

38 Transcript of Evidence to Committee of Inquiry into Mental Defectives and Sexual Offenders, H3/13, pp.1–4, (National Archives).

39 Belich, *Making Peoples*, p.318; Miles Fairburn, *Nearly out of Heart and Hope: The Puzzle of a Colonial Labourer's Diary*, Auckland, 1995, p.19. Sedgwick's thesis, 'The Politics of Survival', shows, *pace* Fairburn, the strength and significance of Chinese clan and community organizations.

series of simple questions about white attitudes toward the Chinese. Can we adequately understand them by focusing on Pakeha alone? Do white attitudes testify only to mainstream irrationality, bigotry and prejudice? Or was there more to them than that? Does the Chinese side of the encounter have to be brought into the picture? We argue here that mainstream attitudes cannot adequately be understood without paying more attention to the Chinese themselves.

A popular late nineteenth-century book articulated Western fears of an expansionist China: 'To Rule the World, is a dogma, a creed, a holy tradition of China and the middle kingdom of the Nineteenth Century combined the circumstances that promised the realization of this national dream.'⁴⁰ Such a view, depicting China as pernicious and imperialist, is seen today as simply an embarrassing reminder of the unfounded racism associated with the idea of a 'yellow peril'. But to see these views as groundless requires us to ignore the significant expansion of late-imperial China. It was not only European states that expanded during the 'Age of Discovery', yet New Zealand continues to be seen only within the context of this European expansion. The scale of that expansion was such that we forget that globalization was not exclusively European. The Chinese population doubled during the eighteenth century, from 150 to 300 million, and then increased to over 400 million by the middle of the nineteenth century. Demographic revolution fuelled territorial expansion. The size of the Chinese empire doubled during the eighteenth century and continued to grow throughout the nineteenth. Much of this expansion was westward, into Inner Asia, but it also entailed a 'projection of Chinatowns overseas in Southeast Asia and beyond'.⁴¹ This process, which began during the Song dynasty (960–1279), accelerated during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and involved not only those who were drawn to the 'gold mountains' of California, Victoria and Otago, but also merchants and hundreds of thousands of indentured labourers. Much of the trade in 'coolies' was, in fact, managed by Chinese companies, mostly based in South China or Southeast Asia, who controlled the labour process all the way through to the production and marketing of goods. Chinese were not just shipped around as labourers to service the needs of an expanding global capitalism, they actively generated networks of production and exchange.⁴²

40 This statement comes from D.W. Dooner's *The Last Days of the Republic*, San Francisco, 1880, p.22. It is a work of fiction, but in it Dooner quotes Chinese documentary material and discusses the views of prominent Chinese statesmen, showing that he clearly took Chinese ambitions seriously, as did many of his readers. For a discussion of the significance of this book see Charles Desnoyers 'Toward "One Enlightened and Progressive Civilization": Discourses of Expansion and Nineteenth-Century Missions Abroad', *Journal of World History*, 8, 1 (1997), pp.135–56.

41 S.A.M. Adshead, *Material Culture in Europe and China, 1400–1800: The Rise of Consumerism*, London, 1997, pp.17–19.

42 The penetration of European colonialism in Southeast Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century was accomplished largely through collaboration with Chinese control over labour, revenue and marketing networks. One of the most interesting studies of this is Carl Trocki, *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore, 1800–1910*, Ithaca, 1990. See also Parsia Crawford Campbell, *Chinese Coolie Emigration to Countries within the British Empire*,

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards these Chinese commercial networks incorporated New Zealand. The Wing On Company expanded from its early bases in Sydney, Hong Kong, Honolulu and Shanghai to encompass a web of commercial operations that spread from China through North America, Southeast Asia and Australasia. Similarly, the Khaw family built out from a base in tin mining and revenue-farming enterprises in the Malay states to develop a complex network of commercial interests that stretched 'from China to India and from Siam to Australia and New Zealand'.⁴³

Chinese diplomats and politicians supported Chinese expansion through both commercial and labour networks. Some, like Xue Fucheng, 'Envoy Extraordinary of China to England, France, Italy and Belgium', argued in the 1890s that China was on the rise again and that Chinese should be encouraged to migrate to countries around the Pacific. Xue aimed to relieve the stress within China created by its large population. 'In China there is not one single piece of land that has not been cultivated. With the ever growing population, hundreds of thousands of men will be out of work and unable to support their families The question of how to break this vicious circle by peaceful means and to solve this problem of overpopulation has been on the minds of many statesmen for centuries. After a painstaking study of world geography I have found a remedy for China's population problem.' The remedy Xue found lay in encouraging the migration of miners and merchants, labourers and laundrymen to the 'New World' states of the Pacific Rim. Once resettled in such places, and protected by Chinese consular officials, these migrants would 'be able to purchase land, build houses and raise families there. After several generations, their descendants may even invest in China on account of their heritage. In all likelihood we will be building a new China outside of Chinese territory so that our people may prosper in years to come. This move will strengthen our nation, feed our people, reduce our national deficit, increase our productivity and change our national image. Therefore it's essential to implement such a policy as soon as possible.'⁴⁴ Xue Fucheng's vision had much in common with that of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, whose

London, 1971 (1923). The topic of indentured labour is also one that has been of much interest to historians in the People's Republic of China: see Chen Hansheng et al., *Huagong chuguo shiliao huibian* [Historical Sources on the Emigration of Chinese Labourers], Beijing, 1985, 4 vols; and Wu Ze, ed., *Huaqiao shi yanjiu lunji* [Collected Research Articles on the History of the Chinese Overseas], Shanghai, 1984.

43 'Their aim, it seems, was to establish financial and technological independence that would liberate them from the influence of British capital and British political control' — see Carl A. Trocki, 'Boundaries and Transgressions: Chinese Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Southeast Asia', in Ong and Nonini, *Ungrounded Empires*, pp.78–79. Also of interest is Jennifer W. Cushman 'The Khaw Group: Chinese Business in Early Twentieth Century Penang', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 17 (1986), pp.58–79. For the Wing On Company see Yen Ching-hwang 'The Wing On Company in Hong Kong and Shanghai: A Case Study of a Modern Chinese Enterprise, 1907–1949', in his *Studies in Modern Chinese Overseas History*, Singapore, 1995, pp.177–95.

44 Helen Hsieh Chien, trans., *The European Diary of Hsieh Fu-cheng, Envoy Extraordinary of Imperial China*, New York, 1993, p.65; as well as pp.130–1. For a reprint of the original Chinese text of the diary see Xue Fucheng, *Zouxiang shijie congshu: chushi Ying-Fa-Yi-Bi siguo*

views we discuss in more detail below. Both saw Chinese migration as beneficial for New World societies. Both also saw similar benefits for their own empires through such migration. For Wakefield, Chinese migrants would help transform places like Australia and New Zealand into rich and fruitful colonies, while for Xue they would help relieve population pressures at home and provide important links between the Qing empire (1644–1911) and the Pacific Rim states.

The late Qing government never actively pursued such policies, but it did not obstruct commercial and business interests when they sought to extend their operations beyond the empire itself and thus contribute towards 'building a new China outside of Chinese territory'. The fact that virtually every city or town throughout these Pacific Rim societies has at least one Chinese restaurant today is an indication of the success of such activity, although this is largely forgotten in a world which seems able to measure globalization only by the spread of a McDonald's sign. Modern Chinese governments, both in the People's Republic and in Taiwan, continue to see the value of these networks whose foundations were laid last century. Increasingly they talk of a global Chinese community in which the Chinese overseas can be encouraged to play their part in developing the homeland(s).⁴⁵

This view finds support within Chinese communities overseas. Much of the recent investment in the Greater China region has come from such communities. For many this investment is only one part of a much wider phenomenon which is primarily cultural in character. The North American scholar Tu Wei-ming talks about this wider Chinese commonwealth, which he calls 'Cultural China', as being composed of several symbolic universes. The first is the Greater China region itself, encompassing mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. The second includes the communities of the diaspora, particularly those throughout Southeast Asia, the Americas, Australia and New Zealand. The third symbolic universe consists of people like Tu himself, the 'scholars, teachers, journalists, industrialists, traders, entrepreneurs, and writers who try to understand China intellectually and bring their conceptions of China to their own linguistic communities'.⁴⁶ For Tu Wei-ming, the term 'China' thus encompasses much more than the modern Chinese state. The Chinese diaspora, particularly that of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, created a global community linked together by

riji, Changsha, 1985. The transliterations of the Chinese character for this man's surname may confuse some readers. Nowadays it is usually rendered 'Hsueh' or 'Xue'. But British diplomatic records indicate that the man spelled his surname in English as 'Sieh'. We follow the accepted transliteration 'Xue' but note that his great-granddaughter used 'Hsieh' in translating his diary.

45 Lin Jinzhi, 'Shinianlai Zhongguo dalu huaqiao shi yanjiu de huigu yu qianjing' [Ten Years' Research on Overseas Chinese History in Mainland China: Retrospect and Prospect], *Jindai Zhongguo shi yanjiu tongxun*, 11 (1991), pp.177–207. See also Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora*, Boston, 1990.

46 Tu Wei-ming, 'Cultural China: The Periphery as Center', *Daedalus*, 120, 2 (1991), p.13. See also his discussion of the term 'cultural China' in "'Wenhua Zhongguo" chutan', *Jiushi niandai*, 245 (1990), pp.60–61. See also Yu Yingshi, 'Meiguo huaqiao yu Zhongguo wenhua', in his *Zhongguo wenhua yu xiandai bianqian*, Taipei, 1995, pp.51–64.

commercial networks and a common cultural heritage, both of which transcend the boundaries of the nation state.⁴⁷ The migration of miners to New Zealand in the nineteenth century, and the subsequent waves of the continuing diaspora that have reached these shores, mean that this country has strong links into the cultural networks that make up this global Chinese community. It might require some readjustment of our world view to see New Zealand as part of a Chinese commonwealth, but opening ourselves up to such conceptions enriches our understanding of our past and the various networks that have constituted it. Similarly, concern to distance ourselves from the xenophobia often associated with the notion of a 'yellow peril' should not lead us to ignore the scale of the Chinese expansion that occurred throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the importance of this for New Zealand.

We have seen how colonial nationalists such as Seddon, Collins, Meredith and Hogg depicted the Chinese as 'sojourners' not citizens, men who simply wanted to enter New Zealand in order to make as much money as possible, as quickly as possible, and then return home.⁴⁸ In such polemics against Chinese immigration, which were common also in Australia and North America, this notion of the transient sojourner was almost always associated with the claim that 'the Chinese immigrants were unassimilable, that they created unfair competition by their ability to work for low wages because they had no family to support . . . and that, as bachelor societies, their settlements were dens of vice, disease and corruption'.⁴⁹ In other words, sojourners did not display the civic virtues expected of responsible citizens and were thus unwelcome in the new nation. In recent years, some Asian American historians have begun to deny the validity of using a term such as sojourners to describe Chinese migrants. Anthony Chan, for instance, argues that the sojourner is simply an orientalist construction with no basis in reality.⁵⁰ Can we ignore any correspondence between the actual behaviour of Chinese migrants and white perceptions of sojourning? Can we explain away the sojourning mentality simply as a consequence of the discriminatory treatment to which Chinese were subject?

47 For two recent discussions of the commercial aspects of this global Chinese community see John Naisbitt, *Megatrends Asia: The Eight Asian Megatrends that are Changing the World*, London, 1996, and Murray Weidenbaum and Samuel Hughes, *The Bamboo Network: How Expatriate Chinese Entrepreneurs are Creating a New Economic Superpower in Asia*, New York, 1996.

48 Left-liberal nationalists attacked absentee landowners for similar reasons — see Tom Brooking, *Lands for the People: The Highland Clearances and the Colonisation of New Zealand: A Biography of John McKenzie*, Dunedin, 1996, pp.76–77, 94, 102, 269.

49 These attitudes were not peculiar to the colonial nationalists in New Zealand. They were held also by anti-Chinese agitators around the Pacific. For an interesting discussion of the term 'sojourner', and for the source of the quotation see Adam McKeown, 'The Sojourner as Spaceman: Paul Siu in Global Perspective' in Josephine Lee, Imogene Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa, eds, *Re-collecting: Early Asian America: Reading in Cultural History*, Philadelphia (forthcoming), p.4.

50 Anthony Chan, "'Orientalism' and Image making: The Sojourner in Canadian History', *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 9 (1981), pp.37–46.

The first Chinese who came to New Zealand were indeed sojourners, as both Fong and Ip have argued.⁵¹ Push factors — overcrowding and paucity of land in rural south China — fuelled the Cantonese diaspora. But most young men migrated for the benefit of their families.⁵² Sending a son abroad was often part of a family strategy to diversify activity in order to ensure prosperity. Some who migrated did so because they sought adventure, an escape from the life of the tenant farmer or even an unhappy family environment, but most were not following personal desires. They were sent by their families.⁵³ The first priority for any family was to ensure the home property was maintained and developed, and at least one son would be employed in this way. Other sons could then be directed to more risky but potentially profitable endeavours elsewhere, such as taking up a business opportunity in a nearby town, or further afield, perhaps embarking for the 'new gold mountains' of Victoria and Otago. The trip abroad was undertaken in the hope of making a fortune for the family and thus returning home to a life of status and respect. Chinese migrants mostly fell into this category and thus it is legitimate to consider them sojourners.

Rather than denying the validity of the term perhaps we need to re-think its implications. We should move beyond the narrow polarity of the colonial nationalists who saw migrants as either 'sojourners' or 'settlers', with only settlers accorded the status of 'citizens'. As Adam McKeown has argued, this binary opposition assumes that a person can identify with only one home, and that migration is a one-way process of 'transplantation from one place to another'. But this 'ignores the flow of goods, money, information and people that constantly circulate across social and geographical boundaries'.⁵⁴ All migrants, not just Chinese, were able to imagine themselves as belonging to at least two places at once. Migration was by its very nature a trans-national experience. Colonial nationalists wished to forget or deny this when it suited their purposes, as do those who claim that the term has no analytical value for the modern historian. We argue otherwise. By using the term sojourners to describe the first Chinese who came to New Zealand, we can pay due attention to the networks and institutions that made migration possible. It is a concept that helps us think across the limits of national and cultural borders.

51 Both Bickleen Fong and Manying Ip accept the use of the term sojourners to describe the intentions of the first Chinese to come to New Zealand. See Fong, *The Chinese in New Zealand*, pp.3–4 and Ip, 'Chinese New Zealanders', p.164.

52 These push factors are discussed in more detail in Ip, 'Chinese New Zealanders', pp.163–4.

53 Daniel Kulp, *Country Life in South China: The Sociology of Familism*, Taipei, 1966, p.184; Paul Siu, *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study in Social Isolation*, New York, 1987, pp.107–12; and Adam McKeown, 'The Journey Home among Chinese Migrants in the Early Twentieth Century', unpublished paper, delivered at the Sixth International Conference of the World History Association, Pamplona, 1997.

54 McKeown, 'The Sojourner as Spaceman', p.5. The complexities of these issues are dealt with in a number of the essays in Anthony Reid, ed., *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, St Leonards, NSW, 1996. See also Paul Macgregor, 'Chinese? Australian? The Limits of Geography and Ethnicity as Determinants of Cultural Identity', in Ryan, ed., *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, pp.5–20.

Just as we need to include the various strands of Maori and Pakeha diaspora into our 'national' history, so we also need to include those of the Chinese. New Zealand has developed from overlapping networks of cultural expansion, not just Maori and Pakeha ones.

This wider perspective on the place of the Chinese in New Zealand might make us more attentive to the multi-cultural nature of our society and the global networks that have shaped its history. It should help us appreciate more readily why some Chinese became 'overseas' Chinese, and why they chose to stay in places such as New Zealand. Rather than seeing the Chinese here as isolated, fragile and vulnerable, as they are usually portrayed when the nation is taken as the sole frame of reference, this broader view alerts us to the wider community and culture of which the Chinese in New Zealand were a part. And if we follow Tu Wei-ming's suggestion and consider the communities of Chinese in Southeast Asia and around the Pacific as linked together by a common cultural heritage, we become more attentive to the way in which apparently distinctive developments in one nation like New Zealand were part of a much wider pattern. Viewed in this context, New Zealand's transition from being seen as an isolated appendage of Britain to an integral part of the Asia-Pacific region is less of a traumatic disruption and more of a gradual evolution.

Colonial nationalism, we have argued, excluded the Chinese, but this powerful force in late nineteenth-century New Zealand did not go uncontested. Other visions of the nation, more cosmopolitan and inclusive, existed from the beginning. Both the Enlightenment and Judaeo-Christian traditions contained universalist and humane dimensions. Those influenced by these traditions aimed to build a more accommodating and pluralist New Zealand than most colonial nationalists envisaged. We can see this with Edward Gibbon Wakefield, chief architect of planned colonization in New Zealand, whose vision for the country grew out of the Enlightenment.⁵⁵ The Chinese captured Wakefield's imagination decades before the first of them set foot in the colony; he understood and appreciated the potential of the Chinese diaspora better than most colonial nationalists. Far from despising 'John Chinaman' as a subhuman Other to be kept out at all costs, or seeing him simply as a source of cheap and deferential labour, Wakefield considered him an ideal immigrant.

An earlier generation of historians lauded Enlightenment thinkers for their cosmopolitan humanism but, thanks to the work of Michel Foucault and others, the 'Enlightenment project' has fallen under suspicion. Post-modern scholars are likely to criticize Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume for his racist dismissal of African cultural achievement, or Voltaire for his anti-Semitism. Wakefield complicates such judgements. He advocated rapid

55 Erik Olssen, 'Mr Wakefield and New Zealand as an Experiment in Post-Enlightenment Experimental Practice', *NZJH*, 31, 2 (1997), pp.197–218 and 'Wakefield and the Scottish Enlightenment, with particular reference to Adam Smith and his *Wealth of Nations*', in *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Colonial Dream: A Reconsideration*, Wellington, 1997, pp.47–66.

Chinese immigration into the Australasian colonies for practical, utilitarian reasons. The Chinese, 'by far the most industrious and skilful of Asiatics', impressed him as ideally equipped to 'supply the want of labourers now felt in the British Australasian settlements'. The Chinese had the ability to 'convert' the 'enormous wilderness' of Australasia 'into a fruitful garden'. To Wakefield, son of a devout Quaker mother, the Chinese might fulfil the Genesis mandate to transform wild Antipodean nature as ably as any other race. Once admitted into the colonies and protected by British law, Chinese consumers, 'enjoying perfect security of person and property, whether in goods or land', constituted a major potential market for British and colonial capitalists. Wakefield looked forward to the great day when British manufacturers enjoyed 'free trade with millions of fellow subjects of Chinese origin'. Prosperous Chinese Australasians might even create opportunities for British merchants to market their wares to 'hundreds of millions of customers in the celestial empire'.⁵⁶ Wakefield's ideal world of free trade rendered racial prejudice irrational and pernicious if it disrupted the free flow of labour and capital across racial, national and imperial boundaries. This Enlightenment vision of a capitalist world-system, participation in which required capital rather than any particular skin colour, has burgeoned in popularity in late twentieth-century Australasia, arousing controversy on both sides of the Tasman.

In June 1853, after settling in New Zealand, Wakefield assembled a group of 13 prosperous Canterbury gentlemen — runholders such as Charles Torlesse and the Rhodes brothers, and lawyer-politicians such as Francis Dillon Bell — at Captain William Barnard Rhodes's house. Wakefield proposed negotiating directly with China to facilitate trade between the two countries and to introduce Chinese labourers into New Zealand. Chinese immigration, he enthused, would not only increase 'the wealth of the colonists of every class' but 'add to the value of land'. He hoped soon to see 'a ship of well-selected [Chinese] labourers' sail into Lyttelton harbour. Those who supported this proposal would contribute handsomely to the 'prosperity and greatness of our country', Wakefield declared. Four of those present, led by Captain Rhodes, offered to underwrite the cost of importing Chinese labourers, provided prospective employers promised to pay their cost of passage to New Zealand.⁵⁷ Nothing concrete came of Wakefield's vision until September 1865 when the Otago Chamber of Commerce invited Chinese miners in Victoria to come to Otago. The first group arrived early the following year, inaugurating a steady stream over the next decade-and-a-half.

Wakefield's cosmopolitan outlook by no means died with him. In 1871 a select committee was established to respond to a petition from miners who wished to keep Chinese from the goldfields. The committee refused to comply

56 M.F. Lloyd Prichard, ed., *The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, Auckland, 1969, pp.170–7.

57 For a report of this meeting, and a letter on the subject from Wakefield to William Barnard Rhodes, dated 13 June 1853, see E.G. Wakefield, MS Papers 2519, Alexander Turnbull Library.

or to impose any special restrictions on the Chinese. Members found them to be frugal, industrious and no less virtuous or hygienic than their European counterparts. Similarly, critics of the Liberal government's anti-Asian legislation of the 1890s echoed Wakefield's praise of the Chinese. Thomas McKenzie told the House of Representatives that the Chinese 'were a benefit to the country' because they had 'brought cheap fruit and vegetables within the reach of the people'. Lancelot Walker considered them a 'very useful class'. Samuel Shrimski praised the Chinese as 'quiet, law-abiding, charitable' and 'honest'.⁵⁸

Enlightenment political economy, then, moderated racial exclusivism. The pastoralists, lawyers and businessmen advocating Chinese immigration did so largely for economic reasons; the Chinese promised to be an excellent labour-force and a potentially vast market. These capitalists, hoping to profit on both counts, must be seen as disciples of Adam Smith rather than as modern cultural pluralists. The extent to which they valued cultural diversity for its own sake remains unclear, though we ought to be wary of depicting them as myopic monoculturalists without sufficient evidence.

If Enlightenment political economy tended to undermine racial exclusivism, what about Judaeo-Christian traditions? Did they encourage any openness, compassion, and humanity toward the 'Oriental Other'? Or did they simply pile self-righteousness on top of racism? According to Manying Ip, because late nineteenth-century New Zealand was 'vigorously religious and rigidly moralistic', local Christians saw Chinese 'non-adherence to Christianity' as 'further proof that they were uncivilised and evil'. During this 'age of evangelism', Christian New Zealanders 'despised' any 'non-Christian, non-white, non-European culture or race'.⁵⁹ Some local Christians certainly behaved in this way. In late 1882, for example, a minor controversy blew up at Tuapeka when the Reverend Alexander Don, Presbyterian missionary to the Chinese and founder of the Canton Villages Mission, decided to hold services for Chinese miners, most of whom had not converted to Christianity, in the newly built Presbyterian church. One angry local objected to the prospect of mixing with unbaptized Chinese who, he alleged, went to church only 'to cloak a host of hideous sins'.⁶⁰

Overseas research reveals a more complex picture of Pacific Rim Protestantism than this would suggest. According to the Canadian historian Peter Ward, Protestant clergy in British Columbia constituted some of the

58 'Reports of the Chinese Immigration Committee', Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives (AJHR), 1871, H-5, H5A, H5B; NZPD 1895, 91, p.773; *ibid.*, 1896, 92, pp.372-3. Eric Rolls argues that 'Chinese vegetable growers saved the goldfields from a disaster of scurvy and later, by producing three-quarters of the vegetables eaten in Australia for the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, they probably saved the whole country.' See Rolls, *Citizens*, p.viii.

59 Ip, 'Chinese New Zealanders', pp.171, 174-5.

60 *Western Star*, 6 September 1882; *New Zealand Presbyterian*, 1 December 1882, p.106; 1 January 1885, p.23.

most conspicuous white champions of Chinese rights and welfare. Humanitarianism as well as ethnocentrism, he argues, characterized Protestant responses to the Chinese in Canada.⁶¹ This holds true for New Zealand as well. At Tuapeka in 1882, Alexander Don, conscious of the Chinese miners' likely reactions if their Presbyterian detractors went unchallenged, condemned the 'rarity of Christian charity' displayed by narrow-minded Christians, and gathered enough community support to keep Chinese services going.⁶²

The Chinese themselves do not appear to have viewed all New Zealanders as dyed-in-the-wool racists. A group of eight Chinese miners at Young's Gully near Gore, for example, spoke 'very warmly' of a neighbouring 'Christian family', praising the father as a 'true believer' because his sons did not 'call them names and annoy them'. This family's humane, respectful attitudes explained why this group of Chinese 'listened well' to Alexander Don's preaching, the missionary reported.⁶³ In 1907, when famine struck China, Don immediately launched a nationwide appeal. In less than four months New Zealanders donated £2,600 to relieve China's starving, a substantial sum. The Chinese government honoured Don by awarding him the Seventh Council Insignia of the Excellent Crop.⁶⁴

New Zealand Protestants sometimes criticized the racial attitudes of the wider community. In March 1871, for example, the citizens of Lawrence in central Otago met to consider their response to the Chinese goldminers in their midst. To those who 'strongly opposed' Chinese immigration, P. Robertson, a Presbyterian merchant, replied that the Chinese 'had the same right to the country as ourselves'. He spoke for many other merchants, he declared, who found Chinese miners generally honest, hard-working and reliable, unlike some of their white customers.⁶⁵ Mrs C. Hunter Brown, a prominent Anglican laywoman from Nelson, condemned popular abuse of the Chinese as 'a great shame of us colonists', and sent money to support the Presbyterian mission to the Chinese.⁶⁶ The editor of the *New Zealand Presbyterian* saw 'many gentle virtues' in the 'social and domestic lives' of Chinese. They had proven remarkably able businessmen, the 'equal of any British statesman in diplomacy', and careful, patient and energetic problem-solvers.⁶⁷ 'We make loud boast of our civilization', call ourselves 'a Christian

61 W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia*, Montreal, 1978, p.139. See further W. Peter Ward, 'The Oriental Immigrant and Canada's Protestant Clergy, 1858-1925', *B C Studies*, 22 (1974), pp. 40-55.

62 *Western Star*, 6 September 1882. For a fuller discussion of this and similar incidents see Susan Chivers, 'Religion, Ethnicity and Race: The Mission of the Otago Church to the Chinese 1860-1950', MA thesis, Otago University, 1992, pp.54-56.

63 A. Don, 'Chinese Mission Work in Otago: Annual Up-Country Tour, 1890-91', p.3, (Hocken Library).

64 Chivers, 'Religion, Ethnicity and Race', pp.97-98.

65 *The Evangelist*, 3, 4 (1871), pp.122-3.

66 *New Zealand Presbyterian*, 1 November 1879, p.89.

67 *ibid.*, 1 February 1881, p.143.

nation, and look with scorn upon the heathen Chinaman', said the editor, yet the Chinese displayed the kind of honour, honesty and public rectitude that would shame most Western Christians.⁶⁸

At least one Jewish politician denounced the racism of colonial nationalists in the House of Representatives. Samuel Shrimski condemned Seddon's Asiatic Restriction Bill as tyrannical and cruel. 'I know what it is to be persecuted', he stated, arguing that the Chinese ought to be granted the same freedom and toleration under the 'British flag' that he enjoyed. New Zealand's immigration policy, Shrimski argued, ought to follow God's law as expressed in Numbers 15:16: 'One law and one manner shall be for you and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.'⁶⁹ Arguing along similar lines C.C. Bowen, a moderate Anglican from Canterbury, found it appalling that 'a young people, but recently in possession of islands under the flag of England', intended to keep 'everybody they choose out of this country, without giving any particular reason for their action'.⁷⁰

The Christian most intimately involved with the Chinese in New Zealand during this period, the missionary Alexander Don, has recently been depicted by James Ng as a 'zealot' who held 'strong, narrow, dogmatic views on life and religion'. His 'Christianity failed to extend love to all' people, Ng argues. The idea that 'Don loved the Chinese and vice versa' constitutes a 'modern myth'. In fact this 'manipulative' and 'domineering' missionary never 'lost a sense-of racial superiority'. He chose to 'impale' the Chinese by 'recording and repeating disparaging items and opinions' about them.⁷¹ According to Ng, Don constituted one of 'the two worst detractors of the Chinese last century', the other being populist premier Richard Seddon.⁷² But can we place Alexander Don in the same camp as the colonial nationalists?

Don was certainly critical of Chinese attitudes and behaviour. In writing as a Christian missionary for an evangelical audience Don depicted the Chinese as lost in sin and urgently requiring salvation. He was frustrated by his inability to convert Chinese, as Ng has shown, and blamed them for his lack of success. Ng argues that the 'failure' of the Presbyterian mission may be explained not by Chinese disinterest and resistance but by Don's character defects. The evangelist became 'mentally disturbed' shortly after the beginning of the mission. His 'sense of racial superiority' and 'pronounced traits of domineering and jealousy' further undermined his efforts. Don's defective personality renders superfluous any further explanation of the failure of the Presbyterian mission.⁷³

Ng's virtually mono-causal explanation of the failure of the mission will not do, as recent scholarship on missionary activity shows. The Chinese side

68 *ibid.*, 1 October 1881, p.67.

69 NZPD, 1896, 94, pp.426-7.

70 *ibid.*, 1896, 95, p.248.

71 Ng, *The Presbyterian Church and the Chinese*, p.6; *Windows*, Vol.2, pp. 136-53.

72 Ng, *The Presbyterian Church and the Chinese*, p.9.

73 Ng, *Windows*, Vol.2, pp.77, 137, 146; *The Presbyterian Church and the Chinese*, p.7.

has to be brought into the picture.⁷⁴ Throughout the nineteenth century very few Chinese embraced the Christian gospel, less than 1% in total. All missionaries to the Chinese, whether at home or abroad, suffered frustrations similar to Don's. In New Zealand, most miners looked down on Christianity as alien and abhorrent. They had not come to New Zealand to become Christians and clung tightly to their own religious and cultural traditions in such an alien New World environment. Some reacted angrily to those that did convert, perceiving them as traitors. When Peter Ah Bing embraced Christianity, one of his clansmen refused to pay him the three weeks' wages he owed and would no longer acknowledge him.⁷⁵ In such circumstances, that even a handful of converts chose to stick it out seems remarkable. The transition to Christianity amongst the wider Chinese community came much later, from the 1920s, when those who stayed on found the social and communal support for their cultural practices and religious beliefs were in decline. Only then did the Christian churches begin to provide the sense of social cohesion and spiritual value which Chinese had previously drawn from traditional religions.

Christian humanitarianism characterized Don's ministry from its beginning. In March 1882, for example, a European miner at Round Hill accused a group of Chinese miners of deliberately obstructing his tail-race, stealing his water and damaging his property. At the request of Ah Wing, one of the accused, Don inspected the area, decided that the obstruction was natural rather than man-made, and that the complainant was victimizing the Chinese. Don petitioned the local warden to re-examine the case. He also called on the government to print the Mining Act in Chinese so that Chinese miners would be able to read and understand the regulations, avoid unknowingly breaking the law and escape oppression from white miners intent on harassing them.⁷⁶ In Central Otago during the 1890s white mobs vented their fury on the Chinese, robbing and assaulting Chinese miners. Don publicized these attacks in order to excite readers' horror at 'the apathy with which these fiendish outrages were viewed by the European community in general'.⁷⁷ Don aimed to awaken in readers a sense of empathy for the Chinese as fellow human beings who were being unfairly treated.⁷⁸

74 See, for instance, Daniel Bays, ed., *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, Stanford, 1996 and Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907–1932*, University Park, Pa., 1997.

75 Don, 'Annual Up-Country Tour 1890–91', p.6.

76 *New Zealand Presbyterian*, 1 August 1882, pp.27–28.

77 Alexander Don, 'Annual Inland Tour 1896–97', p.20 (Hocken Library).

78 Sedgwick, 'The Politics of Survival', p.8, declares of Don that the Chinese 'enlisted his help as a mediator between themselves and the European society.' Don worked 'w. the help of like-minded people in the Presbyterian Church who had compassion for the Chinese' thus fulfilling a 'unique role' in 'assisting the Chinese to confront the stereotyped attitudes they faced and the government which took eighty three years to accept the idea of a Chinese community complete with families'. See also Chivers, 'Religion, Ethnicity and Race', pp.135–45.

Humanitarianism led many missionaries to criticize Chinese cultural practices. They led campaigns against arranged child marriages, footbinding, and British and Chinese profiteering in opium, and worked tirelessly for female education and better public health programmes. Alexander Don echoed the eminent Protestant missionary Arthur Smith, who was concerned about these issues, and attacked Chinese passivity in the face of corrupt government.⁷⁹ China's greatest twentieth-century writer, Lu Xun, also embraced Smith's critique. Lu wrote biting satires of what he saw as China's cultural deficiencies, urging the need for change and modernization along the lines suggested by missionaries.⁸⁰ Chinese both at home and abroad idolize Lu Xun as a cultural hero. It is too simplistic to dismiss Don and his fellow missionaries as cultural imperialists, while praising the Chinese writer Lu Xun for saying the same thing.

Don sometimes censured Chinese who claimed that China, as the 'Middle Kingdom', was the centre of the civilized world. Chinese abroad often saw themselves as the cultured few amidst barbarian darkness and believed that it was the Christians who needed civilizing.⁸¹ Few Chinese believed that the *kweilo* or 'foreign devils' had much to teach them. By the late nineteenth century Britons ruled the largest empire the world had seen, with pride, self-confidence, sometimes arrogance. The Chinese, also expanding, remained spiritually and culturally self-sufficient and self-confident. The irresistible force of British pride met the immovable object of Chinese self-assurance. Cultural chauvinism and ethnocentrism on both sides tell us much about the encounter.

New Zealand historians have instinctively viewed the Chinese here as a tiny minority surrounded by a sea of racist bigots whose apprehensions of the 'teeming Celestial hordes' constituted mere paranoia. To many New Zealand observers, however, the Chinese appeared capable of outdoing the Europeans at their own game. Even their harshest critics appeared ambivalent, troubled by the fact that their supposed racial inferiors exhibited superior characteristics. Take virtues such as honesty, hard work, temperance and thrift, which Max Weber and R.H. Tawney identified as playing a key role in the rise of capitalism: many saw the Chinese as exemplars of what Western scholars would come to call the Protestant work ethic. To Wakefield, Chinese workers were 'active, useful, manly and independent'. According to William Montgomery, the Cantonese were 'as enterprising as the Scotch . . . enduring, canny, and successful', able to 'outwork' an Englishman. Even Seddon and Reeves acknowledged that, as the latter put it, the Chinese were 'really a very laborious, industrious race of people, who aid the producing power of the colony'.⁸² The fear that Chinese worked harder, longer and for lower wages

79 Ng, *Windows*, Vol.2, p.87.

80 Lu Xun, *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*, trans. William A. Lyell, Honolulu, 1990.

81 Ng, *Windows*, Vol.2, pp.141-2.

82 Prichard, *The Collected Works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, p.174; NZPD 92, 1896, pp.379-80; *ibid.*, 83, 1894, pp.155-6.

than the colonial working-man — and lived off the smell of an oily rag — forced Britons, who liked to think that they exemplified the economic virtues better than anyone else, to admit that the Chinese might equal if not excel even industrious John Bull.

Alterity had its limits. New Zealanders did not 'other' the Chinese as radically and systematically as we might think.⁸³ It is worth remembering, for example, that for murdering Joe Kum Yung, Lionel Terry received a life-sentence, not a knighthood. The Caversham community supported Chinese residents when, sick of local youths harrassing them, they responded with displays of armed force. Even the larrikins' parents backed the Chinese. In 1915 a Chinese resident defended himself against hooligan attack only to find himself convicted in court. Local citizens organized a subscription list for the victim which he donated to the Public Hospital and Belgian Relief Fund. By the time of the First World War respectable Caversham parents taught their offspring to behave decently toward the Chinese; some local children regularly visited and helped their Chinese neighbours.⁸⁴ One resident recalled of his school days: 'I would never have thought Chinese was [sic] different to us so I wouldn't remember whether they were Chinese or not. . . because I didn't think there was any difference really They were school children, the same as me.'⁸⁵ Respect for other cultures has undoubtedly burgeoned in recent years, but more humaneness and tolerance may be found in our past, and less shining altruism in our present, than we may be prepared to acknowledge.

We have no desire to explain away racism directed at Chinese. It was ugly and occasionally violent, as Lionel Terry's behaviour illustrated. But this sinophobia must be understood within the context of colonial nationalism. Determined nation-builders excluded all those they perceived as threatening the cohesion of a prosperous and egalitarian society. Intent on leaving behind the religious and class divisions of the Old World, they dreamed of a society without alienation in which all shared a common vision and participated equally. Reeves justified exclusionary laws designed 'to protect small industrious communities' against 'the inroads of pauperism, disease, crime, infirmity, and barbarism' as 'neither selfish nor needless'. Rather, he saw

83 Recent scholarship on the Chinese in Australia reinforces this point. See for instance Cathie May, *Topsawyers: the Chinese in Cairns, 1870-1920*, Townsville, 1984. Henry Chan suggests that 'perhaps in commercial as well as gender relations Chinese and non-Chinese interacted as much in harmony as with animosity' contrary to what the 'Old White Australia history' led scholars to believe. See H.D. Min-hsi Chan, 'Community, Culture, and Commerce: New Approaches to the History of the Chinese in Australia', in Ryan, ed., *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, pp.106-17.

84 Olssen, *Building the New World*, p.251.

85 Transcript of interview between Megan Cook and K. McCracken, 1996, p.128. Mrs D. Diver remembered Chinese market gardeners who sold produce door to door as 'very nice people, kind' and 'polite' whose 'vegetables were extremely cheap' — see transcript of interview between Megan Cook and D. Diver, p.272. These transcripts are held in the History Department, University of Otago.

them as the 'first duty' of good government: 'Small democracies, with limited capital, which refuse to let human beings starve, and whose consciences revolt against the sufferings of the poor, and even against the spectacle of compulsory idleness, must exercise some care in selecting those whom they take into partnership, and for whose well-being they are responsible.'⁸⁶ Once we situate the White New Zealand policy within this wider framework, it becomes clear that the state proved as willing to deal as decisively with white enemies as with brown and yellow ones. Where danger threatened, colonial nationalists proved no resisters of race. Their capacity for radical 'Othering' transcended racial boundaries more often than recent historians have been prepared to acknowledge. Explaining away antipathy toward Chinese simply as racism disguises the much more problematic character of our past and the visions upon which the nation was constructed. Racism was an integral part of realizing the highest moral and political aspirations of many settlers. The real enemy of the Chinese was the ideal society.

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⁸⁶ Reeves, *State Experiments*, pp.363–4.