

and well-produced illustrations will ensure the book appeals to the wide market it deserves.

In bringing together existing scholarships and the results of new research, *The German Connection* succeeds admirably in highlighting the lives of German-speakers in nineteenth-century New Zealand and their contributions to the development of this country.

SALLY MACLEAN

The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography

Windows on a Chinese Past. By James Ng. Volumes 1 and 4, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1993. 400 pp; 300 pp. NZ price: \$195.00 (Vol. 1); \$125.00 (Vol. 4). ISBN 0-908-774-56-7

JUST OCCASIONALLY in an academic career, an historian may be privileged to review a work of scholarship that is as much a joy to behold as it is an inspiration to read. James Ng's superb *Windows on a Chinese Past*, Volumes 1 and 4, magnificently produced by George Griffiths of Otago Heritage Books, represents for me the single most significant contribution to our knowledge and understanding of an ethnic minority people in New Zealand.

There is just so much to explore in these two volumes that the decision to produce Volumes 2 and 3 at a later date can only ensure that this work receives the attention that it so richly deserves. The photographic reproduction of the detailed notebook compiled by the Reverend Alexander Don in his capacity as Presbyterian Missioner to the Chinese goldminers of Otago and Southland has ensured that this meticulous and unique bi-lingual collection of information about the 3500 men with whom Don was associated during the years 1896-1913 will never again run the risk of disappearing without trace. (The mixed fortunes of the original black notebook should be compulsory reading for all librarians-in-training.) Comprehensive cross-referencing in the index means that students and genealogists alike can mine this remarkable resource for its insights into the occupations, illnesses, origins and education of a substantial group of Chinese migrants. The columns (from p.50 onwards) which list the 'Years from China' and 'Times returned' are poignant confirmation of the personal cost of separation, portrayed so vividly in 'Illustrious Energy', the recent New Zealand-made film on the Chinese goldminers of Otago. Mobility throughout the colony, financial enterprise, poll tax payments and opium fines, family relationships and causes of death: the data base possibilities are obvious but so too is the teaching potential of the individual pages. A reviewer can only hope that teachers of the nineteenth-century New Zealand option at seventh form will be able to purchase these two volumes despite the constraints of school library budgets.

The dustjacket for Volume I opens with the proud statement: 'Never again will the Chinese contribution to New Zealand and its goldfields history be submerged for lack of recorded evidence'. The claim is justified. Readers who are impatient of the evocative and more leisurely insights into the cultural background of the Chinese miners can omit Part I if they must and move to mine the photographic, documentary and contemporary evidence contained in the six detailed chapters of Part II. Tables provide information on age groups, arrivals and departures, earnings, imports, exports, occupations and gender balance. Endpapers and the maps within the text ensure that readers can always locate geographical references mentioned in the text and within Don's diary. The footnotes to

each of these Part II chapters may have been a publisher's nightmare but both James Ng and George Griffiths are to be congratulated on their decision to produce such a detailed sub-text for the benefit of other researchers. The consistent captioning and dating of all photographs in the text is another indication of the close attention to detail which is a hallmark of this production.

Windows on a Chinese Past is the product of some twenty-five years of sustained research, a commitment which James Ng (and his wife, Eva) have upheld despite demanding professional and personal involvement within a number of organizations in the Otago community. The quality of the research, the generosity of referencing, the interweaving of personal experience and historical narrative: work of this calibre and kind is a salutary reminder to professionals in the field that too great a cost-accountant emphasis on a rigorous observance of time, budget and word restraints may diminish rather than enrich the volume of published literature on New Zealand's past. James Ng's long-term dedication represents an important tradition in our historical literature: the contribution of the committed scholar who aims to give, not a skeleton for others to clothe but a well-covered and fully-formed body, lacking only minor embellishments if it lacks anything at all. Commitment and completion do not always coincide. J.C. Beaglehole's publications on James Cook made accessible the observations and achievements of a master mariner: Graham Bagnall's 'Tongariro' manuscript languishes unpublished for lack of the relatively meagre funding that would allow editing and referencing to be finished. We need our concise and tightly-argued 180-page perspectives on our past — but we must also value the breadth of vision that a wider window can provide.

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Punishment in a Perfect Society. The New Zealand Penal System 1840-1939. By John Pratt. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1992. 288 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-239-2.

AT LAST we have a published account of the New Zealand penal system during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which is informed by current thinking on the history of punishment in Europe and North America. John Pratt applies the insights of Michel Foucault as modified by Pieter Spierenburg and David Garland. Such insights are not simply transposed: the impact of colonization on Maori processes of punishment has to be reckoned with, as well as the ways in which the Pakeha system deviated in reality from the models brought from Britain. Potentially, this is an important book.

John Pratt sees two separate histories of punishment as constituting the foundations of the modern New Zealand penal system. One history is that of the Maori 'way' of punishment which was 'formally silenced' by the imposition of the British system during the nineteenth century. (How this 'history of silence' constitutes a 'foundation' for the modern system is unclear — except as a possible 'site of opposition to [Pakeha] power'.) The elements of the Maori 'way' are described and implicitly compared favourably to the European model. Drawing selectively on contemporary observations, the account of the gradual supersession of Maori institutions and practices emphasizes the aims of the colonizers. It lacks the subtlety and wider context of Alan Ward's larger study. It does not consider how the Maori system itself altered to meet new sources of dispute and disorder,