

**NANCY WAI-LAN KWOK-GODDARD:
A PIONEER HUMANIST-SOCIALIST**

MANYING IP
University of Auckland

Introduction

Nancy Kwok-Goddard (1923–2012) was a pioneer among New Zealanders who worked to forge formal and significant links between China and New Zealand. China was her ancestral homeland, from which her parents had migrated. More importantly, it was a country with which she strongly identified for both cultural and ideological reasons. To Nancy, China remained very much a utopia, a spiritual homeland which was out-of-reach and physically inaccessible until her adult life.

Nancy's life story encapsulates and mirrors the tortuous relationship between New Zealand and China from the 1920s till contemporary times. New Zealand is the country into which she was born, but, at the time of her birth and during her formative years, it treated her and her co-ethnics very much like second-class citizens.¹ She was born Wai-lan Kwok 郭蕙兰, "Gracious Orchid" of the Kwok Family. Nancy and her peers who were locally born Chinese New Zealanders were given the dubiously complimentary label of the "model minority" because of their quiet, trouble-free, law-abiding habits. During Nancy's formative years, the Chinese were predominantly green grocers and market gardeners, keeping a low profile and working diligently to service mainstream New Zealanders. As a group they were upheld as positive examples of good citizens for not causing any trouble to the establishment, but at the time few people seriously expected any Chinese individual to take genuine leadership roles or to push for significant social changes. The general expectation was that the Chinese should remain undemanding, modest, and low-key, and be grateful that they were allowed into New Zealand.

Nancy was, in fact, as a 1997 newspaper headline suggests, "ahead of her time."² During the early 1950s, the Korean War and the Cold War dominated many New Zealander's views of Asia, and Nancy was treated with distrust and suspicion in New Zealand, especially during the years of McCarthyism.³ Yet the on-going contribution

1 Manying Ip, *Home away from Home: Life Stories of Chinese Women in New Zealand* (Auckland: New Women's Press, 1990).

2 Steven Young, "A little ahead of Her Time," *City Voice* [Wellington], 19 June 1997, 20.

3 Nancy and her husband, George Goddard, were on the New Zealand SIS (Security Intelligence Service) surveillance list. See Manying Ip, *Being Maori-Chinese: Mixed Identities* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), 159–60.

that Nancy has made, on a community level and on an international level, has now been formally recognized by both the New Zealand and Chinese governments, albeit belatedly and somewhat retrospectively. In 2001, China named her “Friendship Ambassador to China,” the first time that any New Zealander was honoured in such a way.⁴ The title was awarded in recognition of her decades of work forging ties between New Zealand and China. In 1997, the New Zealand government awarded her a CNZM (Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit). The medal is high up in the New Zealand honours system, just one step short of being made a Knight or Dame. The award marked a radical change in official attitude from that of earlier decades, when she was regarded as an extremist, a militant communist sympathizer who incessantly advocated the recognition of the People’s Republic of China.

For those who knew Nancy as a person, such public accolades are most befitting for this diminutive Chinese female. (As she was fond of remarking, she stood only 4 foot 10 inches.) In her private life, she was discreetly low profile, exceptionally modest, gentle, and quietly spoken. However, she could be forthright and dazzlingly articulate when making open pronouncements in public.

While the attitudes of the governments of China and New Zealand changed dramatically over the decades, Nancy remained remarkably single-minded and steadfast to her youthful ideals. She was committed to her lifelong mission of forging links between New Zealand and China, pursuing her ultimate goal through various channels and by different means. In working on this essay, I visited Nancy to ascertain details regarding various incidents in her life. When she was at an advanced age of eighty-eight, with slowly fading memories and declining health, the one topic of conversation that lifted her spirits and brought a sparkle to her eyes was invariably “China”: “So you will be going to China? Ah, I’ve been there quite a few times, but now ... Next time, tell me what it is like now.”

This chapter is written with the objective of showing that New Zealand’s links with Asia were forged, not just by famous politicians and leaders of powerful business corporations, or by lobby groups intent on advancing their cause, but by ordinary citizens who were far-sighted and had unwavering conviction. I wish to highlight the role played by some exceptionally dedicated and persevering members of the Asian ethnic group. Nancy Kwok-Goddard was New Zealand-born Chinese, and she dared to speak out for what she believed in at a time when her ethnicity and skin colour stigmatized her as an undesirable alien. During her early adulthood, when anti-Communist feelings swept the United States and the western world, it took exceptional moral courage for Nancy and her small group of avant-garde comrades to champion the Chinese cause and to push for the recognition of the People’s Republic.

It should be noted that it was especially difficult for someone from a marginalized community to stand up and advocate an unpopular cause. Not only did they have to punch well above their weight, braving considerable negative attention from the New

4 Kathryn Powley, “Chinese to Honour Friendship Work by Miramar Gran,” *Evening Post*, 9 November 2001.

Zealand Government and mainstream society—neither of which saw the necessity of closer links with Asia at the time—but they also had to combat disapproval from within their own community, many of whom preferred to keep to themselves in order not to attract any negative attention. Nancy’s fellow Chinese were mostly preoccupied with making a living and trying to overcome the many social prejudices against their community. At this time most Chinese were reluctant to rock the boat.⁵

Nancy’s life parallels the many upheavals and remarkable developments that the New Zealand Chinese community underwent when its allegiances changed over time. Nancy’s own family was a microcosm of the Chinese community. Conflicts between Nancy and her parents reflected the internal tensions of the community, with most of the old leaders supporting the Nationalists and a small faction of young radicals supporting the Communists. The intra-community clash in turn mirrored the conflicts between the Guomindang (Nationalist) government and the Communist insurgents, and, later, the rival claims to legitimacy of the Beijing-based Communist government and the Taiwan-based Nationalists. The bitter political rivalries in the homeland caused great divergence amongst the overseas Chinese. Nancy’s life story offers a fresh humanistic angle to show how pivotal roles can be played by individuals with conviction and dedication. Someone persistent and visionary can help change the course of history, facilitating links and positive developments.

This chapter is structured chronologically, charting the major events in Nancy’s life story. The focus is on two significant formative influences in her life. The first is her lived experience of growing up in New Zealand in the 1920s and 1930s, when the Chinese community was small, tight-knit, politically marginalized, and severely disadvantaged. The second influence is socialist ideology, the ideas of Marxist-Leninism to which she was exposed as a youthful university undergraduate and through which she met her future husband George Goddard. Her political activism in the Cold War years in the late 1950s meant that she was swimming against the tide and risking becoming a social pariah. She became an important founding member of the New Zealand–China Friendship Society and remained an active member of the New Zealand Communist Party. Yet it could be argued that she achieved her ultimate goals, not just by her considerable organizational skills and tireless political activism, but by her soft power of persuasion, her patient work in the community, and her personal example of unwavering commitment.

A New Zealand-Born Chinese Girl in the 1920s

Nancy was born in 1923 in Wellington, the first New Zealand-born daughter of immigrant Chinese parents, William and Joon Foon Kwok. She grew up in an intensely racist period, when anti-Chinese feelings were officially institutionalized and enshrined

5 For the precarious social status of local-born Chinese and their general lack of confidence, see Bevan Yee, “Coping with Insecurity: Everyday Experiences of Chinese New Zealanders,” in *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, ed. Manying Ip (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), 215–35.

in the poll tax imposed on all Chinese immigrants. Introduced in 1881,⁶ this piece of discriminatory legislation was designed to limit the number of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand. The poll tax and other laws and policies—such as the education test, the requirement of re-entry permits, and the enforcement of thumb-printing of all Chinese travelling within and out of New Zealand—are illustrative of the blatant racial discrimination that ethnic Chinese suffered during the period. Although Nancy herself was not subjected to the poll tax, being local-born, her mother and two elder sisters each paid £100 for the privilege of entering New Zealand.⁷ When Nancy left New Zealand to travel overseas, she needed a re-entry permit and was thumb-printed—an indignity to which all Chinese, including local-born citizens, were subjected.⁸ Even within New Zealand, whenever her China-born elder sisters moved around—travelling to other cities to attend ordinary family gatherings, such as weddings or birthday parties—they needed to report themselves to the local police station.⁹ That was a requirement with which all Chinese aliens had to comply. Nancy would have grown up fully aware of the discrimination that the Chinese were subjected to, even though she was locally born.

Nancy's mother, Mrs Joon-Foon Kwok, led a typically cloistered life and avoided contact with Europeans. Chinese women used to lead insular lives in their home villages, but their lives in New Zealand in those early years were particularly lonely and isolated. For a start, Chinese women were a rarity. Chinese people were considered “undesirable aliens,” and their women were particularly unwelcome.¹⁰ The 1921 census listed only 273 Chinese females in the entire Dominion. Nancy's mother spoke no English and was always very self-conscious about her difference from mainstream New Zealanders. Given the harsh and unfriendly social climate, such diffidence is unsurprising. Mrs Kwok had special reasons to be self-conscious: she had bound feet and walked with difficulty wearing specially made boots. According to her daughters, she avoided closely mixing with people beyond her family, especially “English people.” Speaking in a television documentary, her daughter Sadie recalled, “Mother was one of those last groups of Chinese women who still had bound feet ... she was a very dainty woman ... said to have perfect bound feet.”¹¹

6 N.R. Murphy et al., *The Poll-Tax in New Zealand* (Wellington: Office of Ethnic Affairs, Department of Internal Affairs, 2002).

7 Manying Ip, *Dragons on the Long White Cloud: The Making of Chinese New Zealanders* (North Shore City: Tandem, 1996), 106–7.

8 *Ibid.* For more details on the legislative discrimination against the Chinese, see N.R. Murphy, “Joe Lum v. Attorney General: The Politics of Exclusion,” in *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, ed. Manying Ip (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), 48–67.

9 Ip, *Dragons on the Long White Cloud*, 114.

10 Manying Ip, “Redefining Chinese Female Migration: From Exclusion to Transnationalism,” in *Shifting Centres: Women and Migration in New Zealand History*, ed. Lyndon Fraser and Katie Pickles (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002), 149–66.

11 Helene Wong, “Footprints of the Dragon,” episode 4 in *New Zealand: An Immigrant Nation*, television documentary (Wellington: Top Shelf Productions, 1994).

Nancy and her younger siblings were all born at home with the help of a midwife, in a room located above the Kwok family's fruit shop at 196 Cuba Street. As with most New Zealand Chinese families, the Kwok siblings worked hard at school and helped with the family business, while socially keeping very much to themselves. At that time, the Chinese community was numerically very small and socially marginalized. Their political status was precarious, since no immigrant Chinese were eligible for New Zealand citizenship. From 1907 to 1952, the process of applying for naturalization as "British subjects" was explicitly denied to all ethnic Chinese.¹² The overt legislative discrimination and hostile social climate made it very clear that they were not welcome. Neither the macro political-social climate nor the internal condition of the Chinese community was conducive to nurturing the generation of Nancy and her siblings into leadership roles.

The Family Shop and the Ten Kwok Siblings

Yet from the beginning, the Kwok siblings had a couple of advantages which helped them to break out from the ethnic enclave and to excel. First, their father, William Kwok, was comparatively well off, and, like other successful shop owners amongst his compatriots, he became a community leader by virtue of his social status, his knowledge of New Zealand society, and his philanthropic work. During the 1930s and 1940s, well-established Chinese shop owners became leaders because their shops provided necessities, such as rice and soya sauce, for their countrymen. The shops became a kind of community centre, a sort of social club, and a pseudo-bank, keeping money for their fellow country folks. The shop would also serve as a kind of post office, since many Chinese were itinerant labourers with no fixed abode. Shop owners like William Kwok provided immigration advice since many new immigrants would go to them first, to buy daily necessities, implements, and to seek advice. At the same time, New Zealand immigration officials would seek Chinese shop owners' help as community liaison persons and interpreters.¹³

William Kwok was intensely patriotic towards his homeland, China. His children remember his generous donations to the war effort against Japan and the financial assistance he gave needy fellow villagers. He also organized fundraising and celebratory parades for community functions. This community spirit and patriotism was inherited by a number of his children.

The second advantage the Kwok children enjoyed was strength in numbers. With nine girls and one boy, the Kwoks could easily form the core of a social club, the mainstay of sports teams, and the nucleus of choir groups. While the Kwok parents were strict, they were comparatively open-minded and encouraged their children to have a wider

12 Ip, *Home away from Home*, 178.

13 For the community roles of Chinese business leaders, see "Hugh Sew Hoy" and "Thomas Wong Doo," in *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 5 (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs; Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000), 466–67, 150–51.

life beyond the family shop. Supporting their children in musical pursuits was not yet typical of Chinese parents, but Joon-Foon Kwok was a great lover of music and made sure that her children learnt to play musical instruments. Even more fundamentally, William Kwok made sure that all his children were well educated. “Father was liberal and progressive, because he had all nine of us girls properly educated. I have a great deal of admiration for his forward thinking. He was not demonstrative but must have been a caring parent,” said Nancy.¹⁴

The two factors of having supportive parents and enjoying solidarity among siblings combined to their advantage, and the Kwok siblings easily took up leadership roles among their young Chinese contemporaries. According to Frank, he and his sisters had a reputation for being a bit avant-garde. Among reticent, conservative Chinese, they were viewed as “those terrible Kwoks.”¹⁵

As the eldest of the local-born Kwok siblings, Nancy was particularly nurtured by her father. According to her younger sister Mollie, “Father trained Nancy in talking on the radio, and to do public speaking.”¹⁶ Reportedly, William Kwok became aware of the special qualities in Nancy and decided that she should be “groomed” to be a young Chinese leader. Mollie explained, “Nancy is very clever with languages, and she’s always the one to sing, and to make speeches. When the radio people asked for a Chinese child to speak, there was always Nancy.”¹⁷ Nancy’s elocution and ability to articulate her thoughts expressively and sensitively are well known in the Chinese community.

Nancy was a talented singer, and her musical accomplishment has been attested to by her siblings and by her contemporaries. The Kwok siblings had their own orchestra, which Nancy recalled with much pleasure: “We all learnt music. Hilda, Sadie, and I were very strictly brought up. But the younger ones could go dancing; go out with boyfriends and so on. That was very liberated by the standard of the 1940s. In those days even in Church, boys sat on one side and girls sat on the other.” Her brother, Frank, added, “Sadie and Nancy sang, Nancy has a very good singing voice. Mollie played the violin, Betty played the cello, Mona played the piano, and I played the trombone. We spent a lot of time transposing music.”¹⁸

In 1972, when TVNZ (Television New Zealand) made its first ever documentary on the New Zealand Chinese community, Nancy was one of the interviewees. She spoke to the interviewer, Geoff Walker, about Chinese customs, the divided loyalties of the local community, and the lengths that some Chinese parents would go to in order to ensure

14 Ip, *Dragons on the Long White Cloud*, 18.

15 Frank Kwok, interview by Manying Ip, Flers Street, Wellington, February 1995.

16 Mollie Ngan-kee, interview by Manying Ip, February 2011.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Frank Kwok, interview 1995.

that their children married within race.¹⁹ In the documentary, she mentioned particularly why the People's Republic should be recognized as the legitimate government of China. On camera, Nancy was very impressive: speaking with clear diction and making her points with great sincerity and clarity. She was an effective communicator, speaking with charm and a natural vivaciousness. Nancy was exceptionally articulate for a Chinese female of her generation. She had a naturally pleasant voice, and spoke with warmth and grace, with hardly a hint of being didactic even when the subject of conversation was controversial or highly political.

Nancy's role model and mentor was her elder sister Sadie, who arrived in New Zealand as a six year old. William Kwok had intended to raise his daughters as prim and proper traditional Chinese girls. For example, he ordered all of them to keep their hair long and straight, plaited neatly and modestly into one long plait down the back, which was the traditional hairstyle for young females in China. He did not want them to work outside the family business. However, Sadie grew up to be independent-minded and strong-willed. Sadie displayed great determination to break loose from Chinese family restrictions, and she had a strong influence on her younger sisters. Nancy recalled, "Sadie was very enterprising, and she learnt very quickly from English people. She was a very determined girl ... she did amazing things. She was determined to go out to work, to cut her hair, and to play tennis. She was very determined to become an ordinary New Zealander. She always encouraged me to do the same."²⁰ Nancy further recalled that "Sadie wanted to be like [white] New Zealanders, and consciously broke away from Chinese ways. When she saw English girls horse-riding and playing tennis, she would say, 'Gee! Aren't they having a good time!' Sadie really envied their freedom, while the rest of us were too young to understand such things then."²¹ In a 1994 television documentary, Sadie spoke about her rebelliousness with pride: "I was the first [Chinese girl] to drive a car, ... I also rode a horse, and played tennis."²² Under Sadie's instruction, Nancy started learning English words by memorizing the dictionary: "She took out a dictionary, and made me learn seven words every day, starting on 'A'. That started my interest in vocabulary, in English. Sadie wanted to be very English ... My temperament is different, I wasn't as bold, you can say I'm chicken-hearted."²³ Few people who knew Nancy would ever call her that. If Nancy was not as bold as her elder sister in following "English ways," either by cutting her plaits or riding a horse, she was to show much greater boldness in significant areas: by following socialist ideology and advocating for the recognition of the People's Republic of China.

19 *The Chinese Community*, television documentary (TVNZ, 1972).

20 Nancy Kwok, interview by Manying Ip, Goddard residence, Evans Bay Parade, January 1992.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Wong, "Footprints of the Dragon."

23 Nancy Kwok, interview 1992.

The War Years and Changing Times

The war helped to loosen social restrictions. “All the communities, the Chinese included, organized balls and parties for the servicemen ... mainly Americans ... and quite often we held balls for over 1,200 people,” Nancy recalled.²⁴ These social functions were held for allied servicemen, and part of the purpose was to raise funds. The Kwok girls, being very strictly brought up, would not have danced with the servicemen, but they helped with all the cooking and baking. Mollie reminisced with much pleasure and pride: “We organized concerts and the street shows for Victory Corner ... we organized parades and floats. I think Mother and Father were really quite proud of this bit of our public activity because it was part of the official war effort.”²⁵ For the Kwok siblings growing into their late teens and twenties, it was a time for them to try organizing youth activities, such as patriotic fund-raising fairs and singing at Victory Corner.

After the outbreak of the war, William Kwok became even more committed to community activities and assumed more public roles. He was a prominent community leader and a staunch supporter of the Chinese Nationalist Party. He was one of the founding fathers of the Tung-Tsang (Tung-Jung) Association,²⁶ which consisted mainly of fellow villagers from the same district, and he was a key member of the New Zealand Chinese Association, which, during the war, very effectively coordinated nationwide donation efforts among the Chinese. He served on the committees of both associations and held various positions, such as president and secretary, over the years. The Kwok family photo albums, now archived in the Turnbull Library, contain a collection of official photos in which William Kwok posed with New Zealand politicians such as Peter Fraser and Sir Keith Holyoake, often with a contingent of Chinese community representatives present, marking the various occasions when submissions and official representations were made on public issues on behalf of the Chinese community. Frank Kwok recalls his father’s philanthropy and his devotion to the China cause:

Father was generous donating to war funds. Someone says “one hundred,” and he would say “two hundred” ... Father was very very community spirited ... We were very frugal at home.

At the time we had the shop in 32 Webb Street, with a big stable. Many people came to live and seem[ed] to stay there forever. We always lived in the shop. That is why we could work from early morning till late at night ... by the time of the war, Father had made his connections and became provider of ships. If a consignment order came in, everybody had to pitch in and work away literally 24 hours a day to meet the orders... . Father had connections with the Union Steamship Company; they docked either in Wellington or in

24 *Ibid.*

25 Mollie Ngan-kee, interview by Manying Ip, Stokes Valley, January 1992.

26 See New Zealand Tung Jung Association, *New Zealand Tung Jung Association 1926–1991: 65th Anniversary* (Wellington: Tung Jung Association, 1992).

Port Chalmers. Then came the war, we got business supplying the American fleets ... this must be the period of rapid expansion of our business.²⁷

Those were heady years. The patriotism of Chinese New Zealanders towards New Zealand was legitimate and could be given full expression, but the awakening of nationalist patriotic feelings towards China—where most of the coastal provinces were already under Japanese occupation—became a more delicate issue for young Chinese New Zealanders like Nancy and her siblings. As their common enemy, the Japanese, neared defeat, the divergent goals of the Chinese Nationalists and Chinese Communists became more and more apparent, and differences and contradictions came to the surface. With the breakdown of the United Front in China, open conflict erupted within the New Zealand Chinese community.

VUW Days, the Call of Socialism, and Filial Duties

In her late teens, Nancy entered Victoria University College (which was soon to become Victoria University of Wellington) to study English and Education. It was the early 1940s, the turbulent years when New Zealand became embroiled in the Pacific War and young University students became rapidly politicized. Around the same time, a group of student activists at Victoria became attracted to Marxism and started serious study sessions within the university. Though small in number, the group was well organized and had strong appeal to some of the brightest brains amongst the student community.

George Goddard (1928–94) was one of these student leaders. Although he was only in his twenties, George became a fully fledged trade unionist and established a considerable reputation among the radicals. He was also a handsome young man of dazzling intellect. George Goddard was to become Nancy’s husband after considerable tribulations. About Nancy’s romance and her path to socialism, a newspaper reporter, half a century later and rather dramatically, wrote, “On the very first fateful day at university she met George Goddard.”²⁸ In an interview with this author, Nancy recalled that her first meeting with George was in a Latin class. They quickly fell in love.

It was a meeting of like-minds, and, to Nancy, George’s views on social equality were startlingly refreshing and inspiring. She started to study Marxism seriously, joining the study groups established in the university. For her, the theories of the universal brotherhood of the working class could form a wonderful bridge joining the oppressed peasants of China with the underprivileged workers of New Zealand. In particular, socialism became the canon which Nancy saw could be the panacea for the problems of inequality the Chinese community suffered in New Zealand. The economic inequality suffered by Chinese peasants and New Zealand workers reminded Nancy of the many social injustices inflicted on the ethnic Chinese by unwritten white policy in New Zealand. In that context, Marxism could be a perfect solution for all injustices.

27 Frank Kwok, interview by Manying Ip, April 1994.

28 Young, “A little ahead of Her Time,” 20.

George Goddard was to become well known in New Zealand as a leader of the Watersiders' Union and a staunch member of the New Zealand Communist party. Amongst his peers, he was much admired for his brilliant mind, his vast knowledge of Marxist philosophy, and his fierce commitment to the New Zealand trade union movement. He was also an unflinching, loyal supporter of the Chinese Communists under Mao Zedong's leadership, and his love of China was as ardent and fervent as that of Nancy's.

Unsurprisingly, the strong mutual attraction between Nancy and George and their equally strong devotion to the Chinese communist cause combined to make their romance fraught from the start. In the early 1940s, cross-cultural romance was much frowned upon from both sides. The Goddard family did not approve of George's courtship of a Chinese woman,²⁹ and the Kwoks did not relish the prospect of having a white man as a son-in-law, though not being Chinese was not George's greatest flaw: his communist ideology made him particularly unsuitable to be the son-in-law of William Kwok, ardent supporter of Nationalist China. Nancy has talked on national television about how the Chinese community of the time favoured marriage within race. She described how young New Zealand-born Chinese girls would be sent to Hong Kong (because China was a closed world behind the bamboo curtain during those decades) with the explicit aim of looking for prospective marriage partners; "Parents usually think of cousins of a similar age, then they introduce the New Zealand boy or girl."³⁰ She described her own experience to this author: "Marriages were arranged. I said no so many times to propositions ... I was 'half-betrothed' to quite a number of young Chinese men ... they wouldn't have worked anyway."³¹

To Nancy, who had always been independent, such semi-arranged marriages would not work; for her, it was typical college romance. She remarked, "George used to walk me home ... at the time Wellington was full of those US servicemen, and they'd follow anything in skirts—including me with my plaits and everything. George took me to his [communist party] meetings, and it struck me that they were talking a lot of very good sense ... When you fall in love, even poverty is starlit."³² Decades later, their socialist friend Cecil Fowler mentioned how "Nancy and George walked into the lecture room hand-in-hand, a perfectly sweet couple."³³ In the same documentary quoted above, Nancy expressed her sadness at her parents' objection to her marriage. Mr Kwok was a staunch Chinese Nationalist, a faithful supporter of Chiang Kai-shek's government, and a generous donor to the Nationalist cause. George, therefore, was considered unsuitable because not only was he non-Chinese, but, more importantly, he was known to be a prominent New Zealand communist leader.

29 Danny Goddard-Karatea, Nancy and George's son, mentioned that his mother was not close to his father's family because the latter did not approve of the marriage. Interview by Manying Ip, February 2004.

30 *Chinese Community*.

31 Nancy Kwok, interview 1992.

32 Wong, "Footprints of the Dragon."

33 Cecil Fowler, interview by Manying Ip, February 2011.

While George and Nancy, together with their friends in the Marxist study group, openly advocated supporting the Chinese communists, the majority of New Zealand Chinese strongly felt that the Chinese nationalist government, which was the legitimate government in China, should be supported. The Pacific War ended with Japan's surrender in 1945; the Chinese civil war erupted soon after. For China's diasporic communities, New Zealand included, the late-1940s was a period of bitter division and great uncertainty. Overseas Chinese tended to be faithful Nationalist supporters for long-standing historical reasons: Sun Yat-sen, the Father of the Chinese Republic, had strong family and clan connections with the Hawaiian Chinese. He received generous donations from diasporic communities around the world for his revolutions which finally toppled the Qing Dynasty in 1911. Overseas Chinese communities donated generously to the Chinese Republic's war efforts against the Japanese. New Zealand Chinese were, in fact, among the most unstinting.³⁴

The Kwok family members vividly recall how free-handed William Kwok was when it came to supporting the Nationalist government, so one might easily guess how he felt about his favourite daughter's open support for the opposite camp. It is sufficient to note that it must have caused a severe rift and heartache in the family. Decades later, Nancy conceded that her ideological affiliation and her choice of George Goddard as a husband must have been a severe blow to her parents: "what could they expect? If you send your children to University, they meet other people ... Yes, I know Father was a staunch Chinese Nationalist, and I became Communist ... He was always a staunch supporter of Chiang Kai-shek ... he was a real patriot."³⁵

The strong bonds among the Kwok siblings and the love of their parents meant that somehow the tensions generated by political differences were surpassed, and hurts caused were forgiven. In Nancy's own words, "There was a painful period of estrangement, maybe four to five years of not going home ... then baby came along ... and everything came right. Lee was born in 1948; he looked so much like Father. Everyone was overjoyed." The arrival of babies often eases family tensions. Nancy continued,

I might be a communist, but I carried out all my filial duties to Mother and Father. I don't see any conflict [between being a communist and a filial daughter] in the least! True Confucian values should go comfortably with communism. That is what I mean, all that you do should just follow down-to-earth-common sense. ... There is no such thing as pure Marxism ... My Marxism has become ordinary living to me, the most common sense thing to do.³⁶

34 New Zealand Chinese ranked second among the diasporic Chinese communities in terms of per capita donation to China, an achievement of which many Chinese community leaders were extremely proud. This could be attributed to the small and extremely tight-knit nature of the community and the diligence of volunteer collectors who travelled round the country for the weekly donations. Those who failed to pay were "named and shamed" in Chinese newspapers. See Ip, *Home away from Home*, 99.

35 Nancy Kwok, interview 1992.

36 *Ibid.*

Nancy indeed carried out her filial duties: “I did their housework, and took them out for drives, with baby bassinets and everything. Amazing what I could do when I was young ... Father died when he was ninety-one. That was in 1976, the same year that Chiang Kai-shek died.”³⁷ When Mrs Kwok grew old and frail, it was Nancy who cared for her. Nancy’s youngest son, Danny, recalled, “When Grandma was ailing, we lived with her for three years. I don’t know how Mum coped. She cooked and cleaned for Popo, and she looked after Dad and us three boys ... Mum and I would wash her, push her in her wheelchair, and we took her for walks. When her health declined further she called out our names all night.”³⁸

Nancy and George as Social Activists

In the 1950s and 1960s, China was a remote, unknown entity to the average New Zealander. The rhetoric of a “China Threat” dominated popular thinking. To fervent socialists like Nancy and George, China was the ultimate example of an egalitarian socialist state. They therefore advocated for New Zealand’s recognition of the People’s Republic and supported its membership of the United Nations. According to their old comrade Ken Douglas, “The New Zealand Communist Party was the only western party supporting China’s stance. All the rest supported the Soviet line. Nationally, there were over seventy members and the Wellington regional committee had about seventeen members. Many of them were ex-Catholics and very dogmatic.”³⁹

George took a leading role in a variety of leftist movements. He had extensive connections with labour unions and leftist organizations. He served as the president of the Wellington Watersiders’ Union during the 1951 strike. Before graduating from Victoria University, he joined the Watersiders formally and served for forty years in the waterfront industry. He was the Trades Union Representative until his retirement in 1987 and was awarded life membership in recognition of his contribution. He held various positions in the Federation of Labour.⁴⁰

In the partnership, George was very much the thinker and academic theorist, while Nancy was the practical, pragmatic organizer. “What attracted me to George is that his political persuasion is so selfless, for the common good. I agreed with his outlook,” Nancy said. Ken Douglas recalled how George and Nancy cooperated to advance their cause:

George Goddard had a brilliant mind; he was very academic. What I mean is, you couldn’t really have a discussion with George, and you’re just the recipient of a lecture. Nancy was a good, warm person and easily relates to all people. She often interprets for us: she said, “what George means is ...”

37 *Ibid.*

38 Ip, *Being Maori-Chinese*, 165.

39 Ken Douglas, interview by Manying Ip, Hataitai, Wellington, December 2010.

40 Molly Elliott, “Obituary of George Goddard,” *New Zealand China News*, November 1994: n.p.

and explains things in accessible terms. After Nancy spoke, then suddenly everyone understood what George said.”⁴¹

Nancy recalled how she helped organize public demonstrations while looking after her ailing parents and her children: “By the early 1960s, I was also area officer of the New Zealand playcentre movement which was a half-day work. For political activities I joined the New Zealand–China Friendship Society, and we organized Easter Marches for peace and Marches against H-bombs.”⁴² With their strong anti-racist and anti-apartheid views, they opposed the Vietnam War and the 1981 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand.

When the New Zealand–China Friendship Society was founded in 1952, Nancy became an active member. Ken Douglas observed that Nancy’s aim

was to publicize the achievements of China as a socialist country. The strong communist sympathies that the Society espoused made it a target of the New Zealand SIS. Members of the Society became social pariahs. She became secretary of the Wellington branch from the 1960s onwards, and to many she personifies the New Zealand–China Friendship Society. Among the many activities which the Society pursued, the most political one was the advocacy for the recognition of the People’s Republic of China.⁴³

The Society stocked materials such as *China Reconstructs* and *China Today*. In 1963, it made formal submissions to Norman Kirk to recognize the People’s Republic of China. Douglas remembered how Nancy helped organize the visit of writer Han Suyin in 1968. Han spoke at Wellington College, and the talk was arranged and chaired by Nancy. Douglas recalled that the highlights of the Society’s activities centred around the visits of Rewi Alley and other prominent public figures known for their socialist pro-China stance. Nancy worked tirelessly to promote the Chinese cause.

Always “a humanist”

Nancy’s personal modus operandi could be seen in the community work she started in the 1950s when she became chairperson of the Mt Cook School’s Parent-Teachers’ Association. The school had a multi-ethnic student population and was known for its avant-garde policies. The *Evening Post* reported,

A vivacious and attractive wife and mother, with a great affection for and sense of loyalty to her former school, is the president of the Mount Cook Parent-Teachers’ Association, Mrs George Goddard. “We have a very

41 Ken Douglas, interview by Manying Ip, February 2011.

42 Nancy Kwok, interview 1992.

43 Douglas, interview 2010.

vigorous parent-teachers' association, with a membership of about 50 to 60 members representing about 14 different nationalities," [Nancy was quoted as saying] ... "though there is a school committee, it is composed solely of men and concerns itself chiefly with administering funds. Our association holds classes for parents on such subjects as road safety, health, and inter-racial relationships," said Mrs Goddard. Activities include fund-raising, and improving the classrooms, "children are at present accommodated in allegedly temporary wooden prefabricated army huts ... we are arranging a petition ... we shall approach our local MP with a view of taking the question up with the Ministry of Education."⁴⁴

Ken Douglas made similar observations when he recalled Nancy's personal style of pushing for social and political change. He said,

The Watersiders' branch of the communist party always met at her house, in 82 Evans Bay. She was a humanist, with genuine interest in people's circumstances. She became a great friend of my wife, Lesley. She taught Lesley how to steam food with soya sauce, and cook egg-foo-yung. She liked to do lightly fried potatoes and cabbage ... which is so different from the Kiwi way of boiling all the vegetables till they become limp and soggy ...

Nancy's involvement in the Party branch was strong. I'd say it's even stronger than George's in a political sense. George was dogmatic and highly ideological. However, you can never use the word "dogmatism" and associate it with Nancy. Her upbringing and family made her very flexible. It seems that she always looked for the point of "relationship," and never looked for "differences." Nancy always demonstrated humanism, and strode over politics, differences, and prejudices.⁴⁵

In the 1994 documentary Nancy explained in simple and down-to-earth terms what China and being Chinese meant to her. She said, "Chinese children were seldom in trouble at our time: we were just too busy making a living. In New Zealand, the Chinese community was tight-knit, and people were economically inter-dependent. They came to New Zealand as foreigners, but with pride. They remained aliens in their chosen country." "I really liked being Chinese because it meant being part of a huge community. Later on in life, when I learnt the history of the country, I became even prouder. Never in my wildest dream did I think that I would have the chance to go to China." "I visited China ... In 1966, it was. I found my identity ... it was an incredible experience, ... in China, everyone looked like me."⁴⁶

44 Clipping in a Kwok family scrapbook, private collection, n.d.

45 *Ibid.*

46 Wong, "Footprints of the Dragon."

In 1966, Nancy made her first visit to China. She went as a member of the “Anti-Atomic Bomb, Anti-H Bomb [shorthand for ‘anti-US imperialism’] international delegation.” While Nancy was unassuming and modest in her recollection, the Chinese government’s official line was much less low-key. The *People’s Daily* 人民日报 reported the official function in typically propagandistic terms. Nancy was called the “New Zealand delegate ‘fandi zhanshi’ 反帝战士 (anti-imperialist fighter),” a member of the “fandi fanxi douzheng” 反帝反修斗争 (anti-imperialist, anti-revisionist struggle).⁴⁷ Under the banner headline on the front page, the newspaper reported:

[Nancy] Goddard said, “It has become increasingly clear to all people of the world who is the real culprit waging an aggressive war against peace-loving countries. In Vietnam, the United States should be held responsible for this most barbarous war. It totally violated the 1954 Geneva Convention[”] ... Goddard said, “we have the responsibility to broadcast to the entire world how the Vietnamese people have valiantly fought for their country’s independence ... we should not ally ourselves with those who have no determination to resist American imperialism ... they close their eyes when someone chose to intimidate the world with the threat of the H bomb, but when those who are bullied took legitimate steps to protect themselves, they raised their hands in protest.”⁴⁸

Nancy remained a staunch supporter of China throughout the “anti-America, anti-Imperialist” period. She was a close ally of Rewi Alley and kept in contact with him through regular correspondence. She visited him each time she travelled to China, and Alley stayed with her on his visits back to New Zealand.

In the early 1990s, when China was rapidly opening up to the rest of the world and embarking on various capitalist experiments, Nancy talked to me and reminisced about her decades of social and political work, pushing for social justice and the recognition of China. She was philosophical, modest, and reflective. There was little of the bitterness typical of many veterans who felt that China had abandoned socialism:

Our struggle is so easy compared to those of others. George has been a member of the Watersiders; they went through 1951. We went on the anti-Springbok demonstrations, got bashed on our heads. But it was nothing, really nothing ... compared to what happened in South Africa. What I did was so small.⁴⁹

The early 1990s was a time of disillusionment for some diehard socialists. Among them was George Goddard, who was in rapidly declining health. Nancy said of him,

47 “Anti-Imperialist Warriors Addressing 10,000 Audience at the Capital,” *People’s Daily*, 13 August 1966, 1.

48 *Ibid.*

49 Nancy Kwok, interview 1992.

George served thirty-five years on the Watersiders' Union. He went through the heydays. Now it's a very different scene ... with a few hundred members only ... but he partook in very exciting developments, and now has got all the memories to go on ... The number of communists that I know of, including George, who threw up their hands and exclaimed, "I've dedicated my life to the movement and now it has gone to this!" I'd say to them, "How important are you?"

The decision to serve ... has got to be genuine. It needs to become a natural way of thinking and living. I *know* I am not important. Maybe it is easier for women to accept this... I *know* now I don't think like many other people. The world has changed, I have to change with it in order to become part of the solution instead of becoming part of the problem.⁵⁰

Nancy's Affinity with Māori

One of the unusual chapters of Nancy's life was her affinity with Māori. Nancy was a pioneer in forging inter-racial links. At first, she became interested in Māori because of her socialist, egalitarian ideals. She looked after many Māori children in Mt Cook School. To champion the disadvantaged and the social underdogs had long been her cause, even without George's iwi links and political leanings.

I interviewed Nancy in 2002, for background knowledge at the start of my Māori-Chinese Encounters research project.⁵¹ Nancy pioneered links between Māori, Chinese New Zealanders, and China. She again spoke about her work in modest and down-to-earth terms: "It all started when I became involved with Māori children in Mt Cook Primary. I took Danny to the club, the Ngāti Poneke Marae. It must be the late 1960s, early 70s. I felt such affinity with Māori. We share the same family values."⁵² She showed the author a set of photos featuring Danny as a little boy with Ngāti Poneke, and said, "I befriended the Māori ladies, we cooked and we baked ... and the day when they asked me to help in the kitchen, the marae became my home. I think it is easy for the Chinese to understand what's bi-cultural, because of our own experience." When Wellington and the port city of Xiamen became sister cities in 1988, Nancy led a group of Ngāti Poneke performers to China to participate in the "Xiamen Sister Cities Festival." Except for Nancy, all members of the delegation were Māori.

Beyond cooking and baking, and the waiata and dancing, Nancy undertook long periods of serious and difficult work with Māori youth offenders. For over eight years she was a Court Counsellor for Māori people in trouble with minor infringements against the law. She went to the Wellington courts twice a week, counselling these Māori youths in trouble. To them, she was always "Auntie Nancy."

50 *Ibid.*

51 This research project resulted in the publication of two books: *Being Maori-Chinese: Mixed Identities* and *The Dragon and the Taniwha* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008).

52 Nancy Kwok, interview by Manying Ip, Miramar, Wellington, April 2001.

Conclusion

While it is difficult to quantify Nancy's contribution in bringing China and New Zealand closer together, there can be little doubt that her lifelong devotion to the cause kept the flame going and kept the issue of "recognition of China by the United Nations" high up on the New Zealand political agenda. She personified the New Zealand-China Friendship Society. Thanks to her tireless and continuous advocacy and extensive community contacts, the China cause took on a soft human face, even in its most dogmatic and ideological phase. Her example inspired many of her comrades. Her siblings, though by no means socialist, grew to respect her conviction and support her unflinchingly in her many activities and endeavours, both by monetary donations and by joining her anti-racism marches. Her torch is upheld by her children, especially Danny Goddard, who worked to forge Māori-Chinese links. It is most fitting to conclude with Nancy's own thoughtful evaluation of her decades of social activism:

Now, very often, I look around the world and hope that I could do a little good here and there. We are so lucky in New Zealand: good weather, good feed. George joined the Communist party in 1943. He wanted to champion the underdogs. But being "underprivileged" in New Zealand is nothing like being underprivileged in China. New Zealand has never known starvation ... Our struggle is so easy compared to those by others, but the socialist element that I met at University really changed the rest of my life. I joined the New Zealand Communist Party, and stayed from 1944 till 1968. We were expelled in 1968 ... the entire Wellington branch was expelled because of the split between the Soviet line and the Chinese line. We remained pro-China ... and I never regretted it once ... I am interested in socialism because you've got to look at what is going to happen to society. You have to be dedicated to improving the world.

I was so ashamed of being Chinese when I was little, because I felt so different ... Our racial trait is not something that we can sidestep. Look into the mirror, and I am Chinese! So we have to come to terms with it, and then learn to be proud of it. I could only be proud after China stood up.⁵³

Born into a time when the Chinese were a marginalized and voiceless group in a New Zealand dominated by conservative white values, Nancy Kwok-Goddard worked tirelessly to bring her ancestral home and adopted land closer. She championed the China cause for long decades when it was unpopular, even going against her own parents in doing so. Her staunch egalitarian principles also made her a great friend of Māori, in a period when they were largely neglected and despised by mainstream New Zealanders. In more ways than one, Nancy was far ahead of her time. Her socialism was not dogmatic although she was staunch and unwavering in her activism. In her down-to-earth humanistic way, she accomplished her goals and left a legacy for her sons, friends, and colleagues.

53 Nancy Kwok, interview 1992.

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Biographical Note

Manying Ip ONZM, FRSNZ (my.ip@auckland.ac.nz) is Emeritus Professor of Asian Studies in the School of Cultures, Languages and Linguistics at the University of Auckland. Her research interest is on Chinese migration, race relations, and ethnic identity. She has published eight books and over thirty chapters and articles on these topics. Her recent publications include *Transmigration and the New Chinese* (University of Hong Kong, 2011) and *The Dragon and the Taniwha: Māori and Chinese in New Zealand* (Auckland University Press, 2009). Her current research is on the Chinese Internet and its impact on overseas Chinese identity.