Labour Mobility and Samoa's Colonial Past

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In German Samoa, the colonial administration between 1900 and 1914 was surprisingly beneficent towards the colonised people, taking neither their land nor their labour, unlike elsewhere in the German colonial empire (See Iliffe 1969 and Bley 1968).[7] This article examines the reasons for this. Was it simply because Governor Wilhem Solf wished the Samoans well? Or were there good political reasons for Solf to place the government, as he once said, "on the side of the Samoans" (Moses 1972:51)? The factor that throws light on these questions is that of labour.

Before 1914, planters in the Pacific Islands found two answers to the perennial shortage of cheap labour. The first was the Pacific labour trade, which took tens of thousands of islanders to Queensland, Samoa and Fiji. The second, which had parallels in the Malay States, the West Indies and South Africa, was to draw workers from lndia and China. This was the solution favoured by the British in Fiji, the destination of 60,000 Indians between 1879 and 1916, and by the Germans in Samoa.

Between 1903 and 1913, around 3,800 Chinese came to German Samoa to work in the rubber and cocoa plantations, and these workers became the subject of acrimonious dispute between settlers and the colonial government. Conflict centred on whether Chinese should be recruited at all, how they should be disciplined and the virtues of replacing them with Melanesian or Samoan workers, reflecting two opposing views about what kind of colony German Samoa ought to be.

Was it to be a colony of white settlement, where hundreds of German immigrants drove the Samoans from their lands and compelled them to become a rural proletariat? This was the demand of most German settlers who reached Samoa after annexation in 1900, and it echoed the demands of settlers in the African colonies. Or should the government put the Samoans first, seek to protect Samoan traditional life and discourage white settlement?

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[7] In the two largest African colonies, German South-West Africa and German East Africa, the colonial authorities and the army secured white dominance in brutal wars of conquest.

This was the policy of Wilhem Solf, governor from 1900 to 1911, and of his successor, Erich Schultz-Ewerth.

When Solf took control of German Samoain 1900, it was a colony dominated by one company, the Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft der Südseeinseln (DHPG).[8] As the successor firm to JC Godeffroy & Sohn,[9] which had established copra plantations in Samoa in the 1870s, the DHPG was Samoa's biggest plantation enterprise from the time of its foundation in 1878. Further expansion in the 1880s confirmed the DHPG's commercial predominance in central Polynesia.

German Samoa's prosperity and the profits of the DHPG did not rest on plantations alone but on a combination of trade and plantations. Each year the Samoans themselves produced thousands of tons of copra (dried coconut) – two or three times as much as came from the DHPG plantations – and sold it to the DHPG and other European buyers who arranged for its export to Sydney and Hamburg. The DHPG, as the purchaser of nearly half the Samoans' copra, had a special interest in a 'soft' native policy that kept the Samoans where they were: in the village making copra.

The plantation workers were Melanesians from the Bismarck Archipelago (which is today part of Papua New Guinea) and the Solomon Islands, regularly recruited on three-year indentures. First employed by the DHPG in 1879, men from these islands quickly became the company's principal labour source, and when Germany annexed north-east New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and the northern Solomon Islands in 1884 and 1886 to form the 'Protectorate of the New Guinea Company' it prohibited the labour trade for plantations outside the colony with one significant exception: the DHPG was allowed to continue taking Melanesians to Samoa.

The DHPG's privilege of cheap Melanesian labour survived until the end of German rule despite repeated complaints from other employers in Samoa, and in the 28 years between 1885 and 1913 the DHPG took 5,746 Melanesian labourers from German New Guinea to Samoa (Oertzen1887; Hahl 16 November 1913).

The Samoans, if they were willing to work at all, would not work for less than one Samoan dollar a day (about four shillings sterling), while the

[8] English translation: The German Trading and Plantation Company of the South-Sea Islands.

[9] JC Godeffroy and Son was a Hamburg-based merchant venture that established trading outposts in South America and the Caribbean, before expanding trade into the Pacific in 1855 and establishing an outpost in Samoa in 1857 (Washausen, 1968).

Melanesians cost the company less than one Samoan dollar a week, including wages, food, extras and the cost of passage to and from Samoa (DHPG 1902). This “cheap labour-material”, Governor Solf said of the Melanesians on the estates of the DHPG, “created that company's favoured position among competitors in Samoa” (Solf 5 December 1900).

About 350 whites lived in German Samoa in 1900, of whom about ten were minor planters. These planters did not enjoy the DHPG's privilege of cheap labour. Instead, they had to employ Samoans on a monthly basis at ten times the cost of Melanesian workers or else import Niue Islanders, who demanded almost as much pay as the Samoans and were rarely willing to stay in Samoa for longer than a year. In good seasons Samoans were hard to get at any wage.

The obvious solution, as planters impressed upon Solf in his first year as governor, was to import ‘coolies’[10] from outside the Pacific. The numbers required were modest. Only four planters, including the DHPG, wanted twenty or more workers each when questioned in 1901. But the Colonial Department of the German Foreign Office,[11] doubtful about propping up tiny enterprises, declined to follow the example of Fiji in putting labour importation into the hands of the government and delayed until June 1901 before being forced by press criticism into proposing limited government help for the planters. This was to take the form of cash advances to enable planters to finance the introduction of imported workers (Solf 12 July 1900 and 17 August 1901; Kolonialabteilung des Auswärtiges Amts 5 June 1901).

After talks with Samoan chiefs and with Governor von Bennigsen of New Guinea, Solf stopped a plan to recruit Chinese through the New Guinea branch of the DHPG because he feared that Chinese would disrupt the Samoans' traditional way of life (Solf 9 September 1901 and 25 October 1901), a disruption that could affect the cultivation of coconuts by Samoans – on which the DHPG depended.

Meanwhile, the shortage of labour in Samoa had become acute. A plentiful crop of coconuts coincided with a rise in copra prices in Europe and Australia, and the Samoans had less need than ever to offer themselves as casual labourers. Every Samoan had labour obligations to his village, which employment away from home interrupted, and working as a paid servant

[10] The term “coolie” was used between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries to refer to Asian low-wage labourers.

[11] In German: Kolonialabteilung des Auswärtiges Amt (KA)

rather than for the community was in Samoan eyes contemptible. Even in normal times the Samoans found trading with the European preferable to toiling for him, even though they knew that traders would deceive them by up to 50 in every 100 pounds of copra weighed, and that traders supplied them with inferior goods for higher prices. In good years, when competition among traders drove up the prices offered for the copra grown by Samoans, the Samoans could afford to withdraw completely from the labour market.

Such was the case in 1902, when the DHPG's ceiling price for Samoan labour was for a time exceeded by those of American and German planters. A Samoan labour exchange set up at the suggestion of planters proved a failure, and by May 1902 the acting governor, Heinrich Schnee, was predicting that plantations would come to a standstill if something were not done soon about labour (DHPG 1902; Schnee 19 May 1902).

Imposing forced labour on the Samoans was no alternative. In circumstances very different from those of German New Guinea, Solf imposed both road-building duties and a head tax on the Samoans within the first year of his governorship. He did so with the consent of the *malo* (the Samoan administration through which the Germans governed the Samoan part of the population), and in the case of the head-tax he agreed to the *malo's* stipulation that the money be used to pay the wages of Samoan officials, who received between 80 and 480 marks a year. With their relatively large income from trading copra, Samoans, unlike many New Guineans, could usually afford to pay the tax without having to hire themselves out as labourers.

The constant threat of Samoan rebellion made any further exactions impossible: Samoans had frequently taken to arms in the previous half-century, most recently in the civil war of 1899, and the Germans had not forgotten the battle at Fagali’i on 18 December 1888, when Samoan warriors under Mata'afa killed two German officers and thirteen marines.

The colonial government could not even risk opposing strikes by Samoan labourers. In June 1902, for example, the *malo* ordered a group of Samoan road-workers to strike for more pay and food, and acting-governor Schnee, afraid of provoking disaffection, punished no one (Stünzner 19 June 1902).

Any attempt to change this situation by force, as new settlers were later to demand, would perhaps have led to Samoan insurrection, Solf thought, and certainly to passive resistance by the Samoans, a refusal to trade with Europeans and ruin for the expatriate economy.

The scarcity of plantation labour was exacerbated by new investment in German Samoa. Francis Harman, an English solicitor, formed the Upolu Cacao Company of Birmingham with a capital of £30,000 in 1901 and began planting early in 1902, employing Samoan labourers. However, the labourers did not stay. Acting-governor Schnee reported that the "lazy fellows" had all left Harman's plantation by April (Schnee 7 April 1902).

More serious for the colonial government was the influx of German settlers during 1902. Most were settlers without substantial means, who had come to Samoa in the belief that it was a South Sea island paradise where they could make their fortunes by growing cacao.[12] The source of this belief was a book titled *Manuia Samoa!,* a fanciful account of the colony written by a 27-year-old officer in the German Army, Lieutenant Richard Deeken, who became convinced after a brief visit to Samoa in 1901 that it offered unique opportunities for the small planter. With only 10,000 marks invested in a cacao farm, readers were assured, they could not fail to retrieve their capital in ten years (Deeken 1901).

This was not Samoa's only attraction. The book's cover depicted a nubile Samoan maiden, and opposite a photograph of a "young Samoan girl, resting on a cover of white coconut fibre". Deeken told how the beautiful Samoan women laughed whenever they met him with their melodic greeting, "*talofa*" (Deeken 1901:202, 207, 213).

Deeken's book and his lectures in Germany conformed to the romantic picture of Samoa fostered by Otto Ehlers's *Samoa, die Perleder Südsee*,[13] already in its fifth edition in 1900, and by the publicity surrounding the annexation of the western islands of Samoa by Germany (through the Tripartite Convention of 1899).

Solf, perturbed by the rush of enquiries in Germany and reports from Samoa of settlers disembarking with "quite false ideas" about their prospects, could do little but warn people against hasty emigration (Solf 29 March 1902; Schnee 7 April 1902).

German cacao planters poured into the colony. The adult male population of Germans in German Samoa grew from 113 to 148 during 1902, and the area of land under cacao more than doubled (KA 1904:119-121). The leading emigrant of the year was Richard Deeken, sent out as manager of a trading

[12] The planters grew cacao trees, which produce cacao pods, the seeds of which are processed to make cocoa.

[13] English translation: *Samoa, the Pearl of the South Seas.*

and plantation company he founded in Berlin in that year: the Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft (DSG), which quickly established a cacao plantation about an hour's ride by horse from Apia (DSG 1903:8).

Like other planter companies, the Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft soon discovered that Samoans would not work for what it considered a “reasonable price” and, with an eye on the profits to be made from exploiting the colony's desperate need for labour, it applied for the exclusive privilege of importing Chinese labourers for fifteen years. This the Colonial Department rejected, but it was glad to allow the company to import 100 labourers for its own use and up to 300 more for other employers, especially as the company promised to charge only 15 percent commission on the price of each labourer.

To Berlin the attempt seemed worth making, if only as an experiment. Company and government co-operated. Deeken was in charge of arrangements in Samoa, and Solf was dispatched to China where he obtained recruiting permission from the governors of Kwangtung (Guangdong) and Kiangsi (Jiangxi) provinces. Solf was instructed to make loans to those planters who could not immediately afford labourers, using the 100,000 marks approved by the Reichstag for recruiting purposes in the colonial budgets of 1902 and 1903 (DSG 3 July 1902; KA 17 July 1902; DSG 10 September 1902; Consul 21 April 1903; KA 10 April 1903).

A former recruiter for the New Guinea Company in China, Friedrich Wandres, was engaged, and 279 contract labourers, together with a small number of overseers and tailors, landed in Apia on 28 April 1903 after a three-week voyage from Swatow (Shantou). It was the first of seven such expeditions from China to German Samoa between 1903 and 1913, which brought a total of about 3,800 Chinese (See Mosolff 1932:405-45; Moses 1973).

Twelve Chinese lived in the colony at the beginning of 1903, six of them merchants, but the new Chinese were not given the chance of becoming anything more than labourers tied by indenture. Under an ordinance of 1 March 1903, which superseded the Samoan law of 1880 forbidding Chinese immigration, Chinese were prohibited from obtaining land or trading in the colony. They might enter German Samoa, become tradesmen and lease

land,but only with the Governor's permission (Samoanisches Gouvernements-Blatt 7 March 1903).[14]

Solf was determined to deny the labourers the civil freedoms which might have let loose Chinese industriousness. He resisted the demands of European traders in Apia to withdraw the trading licences of the old Chinese settlers, but assured them that he would not hesitate to take action if danger loomed, having seen what the “yellow race” had done elsewhere in the Pacific (Samoanische Zeitung 4 April 1903 and 30 May 1903).

The terms on which the first Chinese labourers entered employment on Samoan plantations were far from generous. Contracts were for three years with free passage home, days off on Chinese holidays and a guaranteed ten-hour day, but the workers were to be paid the low wage of 6 Mexican dollars a month (10 marks), from which planters could deduct the advance of 35 Mexican dollars made to lure the labourers on board in China. The workers were not allowed to leave the plantations without permission, and as Sunday work was not regulated in the contract, employers decided to give them only two Sundays off in each month.

Planters were informed of the conditions of work prescribed by the colonial government for its own Chinese workforce, but in these first years there was no labour ordinance for the labourers because Governor Solf wanted to gain experience before issuing one. Jurisdiction over the Chinese labourers was that of ordinary German criminal law. In May 1903, for example, a labourer was sentenced to 14 days' imprisonment with hard labour for having threatened his employer with a stone. His employer was fined 500 marks for firing his revolver into a group of labourers (Samoanische Zeitung 9 May 1903 and 13 June 1903 and 20 June 1903; Solf 24 May 1903).

The price charged for each Chinese labourer, 714 marks, was beyond the means of many smaller planters, and when Solf hesitated to help them with government money there was talk of wholesale bankruptcies. Solf, a man given to violent dislikes, seems to have allowed his animosity towards Richard Deeken to overrule his judgment, for Berlin had stipulated that small planters be given financial aid (KA 23 July 1903). What Solf could not bear was that this money would go straight to Deeken's Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft.

[14] The *Samoanisches Gouvernements-Blatt* was the official communications organ of the German Samoan colonial government, published in Apia.

The dispute grew into a split in the European community. On one side were many of the new German planters, led by Deeken and organised in the Planters' Association (Pflanzerverein), which he founded in January 1903, and on the other were the old settlers, the governor and the DHPG. In a colony in which every third white resident was British or American, the all-German exclusiveness of the Planters' Association was divisive. Deeken meant it to be.

From the beginning of May 1903, newspapers in Germany, inspired by reports from the Planters' Association party, began to attack Solf's administration. It was one of the new planters in the Association, Schanz, who complained in the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*of 8 May 1903 that the "natives are getting more impudent every day as they are spoilt in every way; instead of treating them as children, according to their civilization, and punishing them properly when necessary, they have full freedom, which bears the worst fruits"(Quoted in the *Samoanische Zeitung*, English section, 27 June 1903). He suggested putting Samoans on public works for two years and, as a way of solving the labour problem, forcing every able-bodied Samoan from the age of 15 to work for the whites at least three months each year. Other newspapers accused Solf of being bureaucratic and siding with the English against the German settlers, and put the case of the Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft (Deutsche Zeitung 8 May 1903; Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung 24 June 1903; Hamburgischer Correspondent 24 July 1903).

Deeken exploited a variety of fears and grievances among both expatriates and Samoans. A number of new planters were former army officers of aristocratic background, who were assured by Deeken that Solf hated the nobility and that a military governor would soon replace him. Small traders, who resented the dominance of the DHPG, were told that Solf was completely its creature. And a rumour was spread among the Samoans that the governor planned to conscript them to eight months' forced labour a year. Deeken's boast was that he would kick the governor out of the colony (Solf 9 July 1903, 12 July 1903 and 20 August 1903).

When Solf finally honoured the government's promise in August 1903 and agreed to pay Deeken's company over 42,000 marks for Chinese labourers distributed to smaller planters, Deeken exulted in his success, saying he had been right on all counts and predicting a quick demise for Solf (Ullman 30 May 1904; Solf 24 October 1903).

In September 1903, Solf faced more criticism from the press in Germany, which alleged that he planned to deport a number of German planters from

Samoa. In fact, Solf wished to deport only Deeken, whom he regarded as a "dangerous factor in the colony", and could not even do that because of the cautious attitude of the Colonial Department (Solf 20 August 1903; KA 24 September 1903).

Convinced that in Berlin it was commonly being asked whether he would even last as governor "until the next mail", Solf confided to a friend that he would not give his professional enemies the joy of seeing him resign. "I remain", he wrote, "the storm must pass" (Solf 20 November 1903). Instead of being defended by an official announcement in Germany as he requested, Solf was instructed by the Colonial Director to calm himself and try to be dispassionate (KA 7 January 1904).

The lull was temporary. After granting Deeken's company the right to import more Chinese labourers, Solf withdrew it again after being warned by the German consul in Swatow that the company's price for the labourers of the first expedition was so extraordinarily high as to suggest fraud (Consul 6 January 1904; Solf 4 March 1904; Solf 15 April 1904). Deeken demanded an explanation for the "sudden withdrawal" of permission. That was on 23 April 1904. The following day he wrote to Solf complaining that his labourers were being incited to disobedience by Solf's Chinese cook and insinuating that Solf himself was to blame (DSG 23 April 1904 and 24 April 1904).

The Chinese labourers had addressed a petition to the authorities alleging that wages were being withheld from them and, against protests from Deeken, the district judge had arranged for an official hearing of one of the petitioners, the overseer Tsan Ah Tsong. On the night of 28 April 1904, Tsan Ah Tsong was brought by four friends to the police station on a stretcher, suffering from wounds that he claimed Deeken had inflicted (Samoanische Zeitung 7 May 1904). Deeken himself, discovering the five labourers gone, rode to the court the next morning and asked that the deserters be energetically punished for leaving the plantation without permission and be returned by the police immediately. Otherwise, Deeken said, the labourers would think the government was on their side. The judge refused.

The next day, Deeken claimed that the judge's irresponsibility in keeping the deserters for a hearing and the government's delay in coming to his aid against the Chinese had had the result expected: that same morning, he said, a dozen Chinese had invaded the house of his plantation manager Bühring, who was trying to handcuff a captured deserter, and had attacked him with bushknives; he had had to fight them off with a Samoan club. It was quite

evident, Deeken reported to Solf, that the Chinese thought the governor would help them and were disobeying orders and deserting in this belief. The whites on his plantation were therefore forced to take up arms in defence of their life and property should the Chinese attack again (Deeken et al. 30 April 1904).

Solf could bear this challenge to his authority no longer. By telegram he informed Berlin that the "shockingly high death rate among Deeken's Chinese, complaints about wage deductions and brutal treatment by him and his overseers, and unreported deaths, finally caused the district court, on the basis of medical evidence, to charge Deeken with mistreatment. He is influencing witnesses by force, assert incited Chinese, and has seriously insulted the district judge. . . . Continuous attempts to stir up dissatisfaction among the Samoans are undermining the authority of the government and the courts" (Solf 1 May 1904).

His trial approaching, Deeken made an extraordinary offer to Solf. Referring to a new rebellion by Chinese labourers on another plantation, he said he was reliably informed that this would not be the last such insubordination. He claimed that the Chinese were planning further riots. The position now, he said, was one which could have immense complications both among the Chinese and the Samoans, who were following events among the whites with the closest attention and would possibly exploit these in their own interests (Deeken 31 May 1904; Solf June 1904).

The split had come to the point where tomorrow there would perhaps be no turning back. In the general interest of the colony, Deeken offered Solf an open and honourable peace. The way Deeken saw it, going ahead with the charge against him at the moment would not only damage his own authority over the Chinese but also endanger Solf's authority as governor. As Solf saw it, Deeken was threatening him with uprisings by the Chinese and Samoans.

On 8 June 1904, the British and American consular representatives reported to Solf that the Samoans were said to be in a restless mood and had made unreasonable demands of the government, threatening to refuse to pay taxes unless, for example, detailed accounts of government expenditure were laid before them (Trood 8 June 1904; Heimrod 8 June 1904). It was the first sign of an opposition movement among the Samoans, which was to culminate in a major crisis for the German administration in 1905.

Despite further machinations, Deeken was brought to trial and sentenced to four months in gaol on two counts of assault and one of slander. On appeal,

the sentence was reduced to 600 marks and two months' imprisonment. In court he openly expressed the fear that he and his wife would be murdered by a Chinese acting on the instructions of the governor, and by a variety of manoeuvres he managed to have his sentence postponed for another six months. He finally left Samoa in March 1905 and served his term in the Ehrenbreitstein fortress high above the Rhine at Coblenz, but he was back in the colony by January 1906 (Minutes of court case of 15 and 16 June 1904; Schultz 21 March 1905; Solf 2/3 July 1904; Solf 5 August 1904; Samoanische Zeitung 20 January 1906).

Solf despised the new colonists. The rush of migrants more than doubled the number of planters and planting companies in German Samoa between 1902 and 1904, though it added less than a third to the extent of plantations. Of the 74 foreign plantation holdings in 1904, 54 were of 200 acres or less (KA 1903:295-296; KA 1905:380-385).Solf complained to Berlin about immigration of “inferior elements” and told Governor Hahl in New Guinea that he would rather be rid of the sort of settlers whom he had the Samoan enthusiasts to thank for than of “a dozen Marist fathers” (Solf 23 September 1903). For New Guinea's sake he hoped that it would not be popularised with a slogan like his own “pearl of the South Seas” (Solf 18 February 1904). German Samoa's first handbook, published with government support in 1904, warned prospective emigrants from Germany, even those with enough capital, that life as a planter in the colony was lonely, monotonous and taxing.

For their part, the new colonists resented the DHPG and its special access to the cheap labour of German New Guinea. A Chinese labourer cost twice as much to employ as a Melanesian labourer, without doing twice as much work. The DHPG found Melanesian women, for example, unrivalled in their skill and speed at cutting copra and conservatively estimated that it saved 125,000 marks a year by employing Melanesians rather than Chinese in the copra plantations. An experimental attempt to use Chinese labourers in work with copra was abandoned by the company (DHPG 1906; DHPG 1908). Though the DHPG itself employed Chinese on its cacao plantation at Vaitele, the small planters came to doubt the conventional wisdom that Melanesians were not suited for work with cacao.

None of the new German planters or firms were financially successful. The Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft made a surprisingly high profit in its first year, but this was because its directors were feathering their nest with the proceeds of the coolie swindle (DSG 13 April 1904; DSG 1904:8). Thereafter it made net

losses, was still losing money on its plantations in 1913, and wrote off half its paid-up capital just before the war (DSG 1914:6-8).

Envy of the DHPG grew with that company's rising profits. The planters' harsh treatment of labourers, of which the Deeken case was only one example, may well have been an expression of their frustrations, as Solf suggested (Solf 24 May 1903; Solf 23 September 1903).

The events of 1904 and 1905 showed that Deeken's party, even though it numbered a mere twelve or fifteen, could be disruptive, even powerful. Solf, who charmed the Reichstag when he appeared before it in 1902, had to be defended by the colonial director in the debate on the Samoan budget in 1904 from imputations of neglecting the new planters. He probably came close to being recalled.

At that time, a “Cumpani” movement began, which was an attempt to put Samoan copra trading entirely under indigenous control. This was a stroke of independence that the Samoans dared to make only because the whites were divided. That, at least, is how the colonial government interpreted it. As the district judge said, the Samoans thought they could be obstructive after seeing the inability of the Apia authorities to imprison Deeken (Kraus 12 February 1905).

The Deeken case revealed the need for regulations governing the employment of Chinese, who were still Europeans in the eyes of the law. This meant that Deeken had broken the law in flogging them even though, as Deeken argued with some justification, the government had usually not stopped planters from doing this (Samoanische Zeitung 25 June 1904). The gap was filled by the Chinese labour ordinance of 25 April 1905, which gave Chinese indentured labourers the legal status of “natives” and provided for them to be punished by flogging. Corporal punishment applied to a variety of misdemeanours, which were defined widely enough to placate Solf’s critics and included hiding, laziness, disobedience, insulting behaviour, breaking the curfew and leaving the plantation without permission (Samoanisches Gouvernments-Blatt 29 April 1905).

Technically, flogging was supposed to be done in the presence of a government official, but in practice planters frequently did it themselves on their plantations. It was of symbolic importance to them; the minimum demand of a group of planters renowned for the contempt they had for the Chinese. Labourers who did not bow low enough in respect for their masters

could expect to have their hats struck off (Safata-Samoa-Gesellschaft and Samoa Kautschuk-Compagnie 1909).

The Planters' Association had passed the first peak of its fortunes by the time Solf left on furlough in October 1905. Before leaving he was confident enough to reconstruct the advisory Government Council, something he had been afraid to do during the uproar over Deeken. The new Council, which held its first meeting in September, was not one the pan-German planters would have chosen. Only two of its five unofficial members were Germans, and of those two Germans one was the manager of the DHPG (Solf 10 May 1905; Solf 13 September 1905).

When Solf returned to Samoa at the beginning of 1907, he was immediately confronted with complaints of a new kind, not from Deeken but from the Chinese government, acting to protect Chinese labourers in Samoa from ill-treatment. The labourers, China claimed, had to work more hours for less pay than contractually stipulated, their food was inedible, they were flogged by the authorities without being given a hearing and they had been detained after their agreements expired (Chinese Embassy 8 January 1907; KA 23 January 1907).

Chinese newspapers publicised the labourers' grievances in the early months of 1907, calling for an end to coolie emigration from China, and it became apparent that the cacao and rubber planters of German Samoa had a new force to reckon with besides the DHPG and Governor Solf (Rex 8 April 1907). The Chinese authorities alone had the power to permit the recruiting of labourers. To replenish the plantation lines, the planters would now be forced by China to make concessions over labourers' pay and conditions of work.

By this time, the cacao and rubber planters had become more dependent on Chinese labour than ever. Expeditions in 1905 and 1906 added 1,073 Chinese to the labour force. Although the monthly wage of 12 marks paid to new labourers was 20 percent higher than the previous wage, it was still far too low for Samoan conditions, as Solf admitted (Rose 26 September 1905; KA 1905–1906; Solf 10 May 1907).

At the end of 1906, German Samoa's 1,082 Chinese labourers were in the service of 91 employers, of whom only nine employed more than eighteen labourers each. The top three firms, which together had 499 Chinese, were the Safata-Samoa-Gesellschaft(SSG), the Samoa Kautschuk-Compagnie (SKC) and Deeken's Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft (DSG), all creations of the previous five years and antipathetic to Solf. The treatment of a majority of

Chinese thus lay in the hands of the Berlin companies and of dissatisfied settlers who were struggling to make a livelihood from tiny cacao farms.

Isolated incidents were reminders that the Chinese were by no means content. Some assaulted their overseers. One labourer threw a rice sack over his overseer's head, “then tripped him up and beat him”. Chinese labourers on the Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft's Tapatapao estate 13 kilometres from Apia went on strike in September 1906 in protest against alleged cruelty by an overseer. A number of the labourers committed suicide. And in March 1907 a planter was threatened with a knife by a labourer. “Coolie Wong Kim Tiu, No.1239” was then “handcuffed and tied to the verandah post by his pigtail” (Samoanische Zeitung 14 October and 18 November 1905; 22 September, 3 November and 17 November 1906; 19 January and 9 March 1907).

China's official complaint of January 1907 originated with a submission signed by hundreds of Chinese labourers. Germany failed to satisfy China with the customary assurances that all was well (Dernburg 14 May 1907). The Chinese bargaining position was too strong. There existed no Sino-German treaty governing the emigration and employment of Chinese labourers in German territories, similar to the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1904 and other agreements made with China by France, the Netherlands, Spain and Peru (Schultz 11 August 1909). This meant that the Chinese could constantly alter the conditions under which recruiting for Samoa was permitted, and when the Germans finally began negotiating for a treaty in 1909, the Chinese government was able to use the prospect of success in the negotiations as another way of extracting concessions.

China's representations in 1907 and the Chinese press campaign that followed not only spurred Germany into considering a treaty, which was envisaged in Berlin as a means of protecting the Pacific plantations and phosphate mines from lack of labour, but also led directly to the dispatch of two Chinese officials to German Samoa in 1908. They went at the expense of the governor of Guangdong Province, to whom the imperial Chinese government delegated the task of investigating conditions in Samoa (German Consul 8 February 1909; Mosolff 1932:418).

The first Chinese official to arrive in Samoa was Lin Shu Fen, representing both Guangdong and Fukien (Fujian) provinces, the principal sources of Chinese labourers for the German Pacific. In March and April 1908, Lin spent nearly a month inspecting the plantations and interviewing his countrymen in Samoa.

Acting-Governor Erich Schultz was sure that, while the Chinese deputy naturally wished the best for the labourers, he also understood the difficulties faced by planters. “All in all” Schultz felt satisfied with the visit (Schultz 3 May 1908). Schultz was misled by Lin's reticence, however, for the report presented to the Canton (Guangzhou) authorities was uniformly damning. China told Germany that Lin had confirmed with his own eyes the truth of the labourers’ allegations of cruel treatment, and that it was proposed to bring the Chinese in German Samoa under the protection of China's consul-general in Australia (Lin 30 July 1908; Ching 27 June 1908).

Chinese newspapers once again carried stories of deaths, suicides and misery among workers in German Samoa, and the Colonial Office, intent now on an emigration treaty with China, was afraid that negotiations would be sabotaged by the continuing scandals. Everything must be done by both planters and government, the Colonial Office impressed upon Apia, “to avoid justified complaints by the coolies even of the most trivial kind” (RKA 16 September 1908).

In the meantime, German Samoa's plantations had been inspected by the second Chinese official, Lin Jun Chao. Like his predecessor, Lin Jun Chao was a Chinese nationalist with a Western education. He had attended the Queen's College inHong Kong, and read English law at Tianjin University (Tientsin), rising to become an official of the fourth rank, higher than that of Lin Shu Fen (Samoanische Zeitung 4 July 1908). He too was unfavourably impressed, and before leaving the colony early in July 1908 he suggested reforms to Acting-Governor Schultz. The first reform, he said, should be to abolish flogging, because the Chinese had been “engaged by the German Government to be labourers, not slaves”; the labourers should not have to wear brass badges of identification conspicuously on their arms, nor should their wages be deducted for sickness; and they should be better fed (Lin 1908).

Schultz immediately instructed the planters in a confidential circular to refrain from private flogging and to follow the strict letter of the law in leaving corporal punishment solely to the authorities. To do so, planters were told, was in their own interest because the labourers were sure to know that Lin Jun Chao intended to recommend abolition of flogging to his government. Future supplies of labour were at stake (Schultz 1 July 1908).

By the end of 1908, concessions of this kind were beginning to disquiet planters. The practice of requiring a labourer to pay back his advance to the employer had been prohibited, as had Sunday work (though for every German

holiday, planters could demand a Sunday's labour), and most Chinese labourers were receiving a wage of 15 marks a month, 50 percent more than that paid originally (Samoanisches Gouvernements-Blatt 20 April 1907; Samoanische Zeitung 20 June 1908; Schultz 12 October 1908; Chinese Commissioner in Apia 21 December 1908). Now flogging too was endangered.

Adding to their anxieties was the resurgence in late 1908 and early 1909 of rebellious agitation by the Samoans under the leader Lauaki, which grew so threatening that Solf called in cruisers from the East Asia squadron. All the planters' old fears about what they regarded as mollycoddling of the Samoans by Solf were revived, and were linked to indignation at the government's failure to settle the 'labour question'.

As a report from Samoa in a Berlin newspaper, possibly written by Deeken, put it:

> *The German government's method of treating the Samoans has the worst effects on the Chinese who have been laboriously imported for plantation agriculture. The Chinese instinctively draws comparisons, and as he looks upon himself as standing higher in nature, which he in fact is, he feels degraded and consequently the plantations have ever-recurring difficulties with the labour question every year (Berliner Neueste Nachrichten 21 December 1908).*

Though hostilities with the Samoans were averted and ten rebel leaders deported in April 1909, a number of planters led by Deeken continued to criticise Solf's administration. At a public meeting of settlers in May 1909, Solf and his critics clashed openly. Solf accused a certain "class of whites" of undermining his influence over the Samoans and, drawn by Deeken's complaint that the governor lacked confidence in the settlers, named Deeken as one of the minority whom he distrusted. As a mark of his anger, Solf then abruptly left the meeting (Fiji Times 12 June 1909).

Solf got some support from Berlin, but was also criticised for his response to the planters' complaints. Settlers were "standing in Solf's way", the Colonial Secretary Bernhard Dernburg commented in July, but it was also true that the governor had not always managed to free himself "from a certain mood of pique at these attacks" (Dernburg 13 July 1909).

The unease in the white community was shown by a settlers' petition, rejected in Berlin, asking that the police force of 30 Samoans be disbanded and replaced by up to 200 Melanesian police soldiers from New Guinea, and that a warship be stationed permanently in German Samoa as security against

Samoan revolt (Coerper 16 May 1909; Samoanische Zeitung 4 September 1909).

The Planters' Association came to life again in August 1909, representing the employers of a majority of Chinese labourers, and the Colonial Office seriously contemplated deporting Deeken and two of his supporters. The Kaiser himself, drawing his information as usual from a naval report, favoured deportation as a stroke against Deeken's supporters in the “insolent Centrum” (the Centre Party in the German Reichstag) (Samoanische Zeitung 28 August 1909; Kraus 9 September 1909).

In the meantime, the colonial government was searching in vain for more labourers. When the three-year contracts of the 1906 labourers expired on 22 July 1909, Schultz, the official sent to China three months previously to get more labour, was still en route to Peking (Beijing), having failed to gain recruiting permission either in Cantonor from the British in Hong Kong. In a gloomy dispatch in early August, Schultz reported that recruiting in Pakhoi (Beihai) and Amoy (Xiamen) was impossible, and that he might have to turn to Singapore.

The largest employers of Chinese labourers, alarmed at the delay, appealed to the Colonial Office for New Guineans or Javanese, and while Schultz continued to negotiate with China, Germany entered upon a fruitless attempt to gain access to the labour market of the Dutch East Indies. Solf was even willing to let Javanese settle permanently in Samoa (Schultz 3 August 1909; SSG and SKC 3 June 1909; SKC 9 August 1909; DSG 16 October 1909 and reply of 26 October 1909; Solf August 1909).

In order to please China, the government experimented with abolishing all corporal punishment, but this was additional proof to many employers that Solf was on the side of the Chinese labourers. Cacao and rubber planters complained of unprecedented insubordination from labourers and of danger to white women and children (Solf 11 October 1909). A Chinese labourer who maimed an overseer was given 15 years' imprisonment instead of being sentenced to death as planters wanted, and rumours spread that the governor was so lenient towards convicted Chinese that he employed one as a waiter (SSG and SKC 1909; RKA 18 August 1909).

Once the new expedition of Chinese workers left Swatow in November 1909, Solf restored flogging, but in the preceding five months of negotiations with China vital concessions were made. The labourers were to work one hour less each day, to have all Chineseand German holidays, tobe paid when ill

except when the illness was self-caused, and – most important of all – to be protected by a Chinese Consul resident in German Samoa. On the day of their departure from China, the 550 labourers, brandishing sticks and torches, themselves wrung an extra advance from the Germans by threatening to desert en masse (Samoanisches Gouvernements-Blatt 17 November 1909; German Consul in Swatow 4 November 1909; German Consul in Swatow 3 December 1909).

The German Samoan government, already unpopular and fearing the planters' further scorn if it enforced all the new concessions, declined to recognise the provisions for sick pay and more holidays, and it took no action against Deeken when he induced his labourers to sign away their rights to better conditions. Both the Chinese government and its consular representative, who reached Samoa in December 1909, were thus provided with ready-made propaganda against the Germans.

The consul was Lin Jun Chao, the more senior of the two Chinese emissaries of 1908. He immediately demanded that the government ensure that the 1909 contract was fulfilled by planters. He wrote to Schultz:

> *Nobody can expect to be always in good health. Even those who take exceptional care of their health cannot prevent sickness. Now all the labourers go to work early in the morning and only get relieved late in the evening. Their work is done under the hot sun. It is not an easy job, weeding and planting being hard work. The weed is full of mist in the morning. They remain the whole day long on the plantation with their clothing wet either with mist, sweat or rain ... they can hardly protect themselves from being sick during the whole three years.*

Holidays should be given liberally, Lin said, and if the government was worried about uniformity of treatment, it should extend the privileges of the new Chinese labourers to all. Workers were whipped by their employers on the slightest pretext, he reported to his superiors in China (Lin 20 January 1910a and 24 January 1910; Lin 20 January 1910b).

The Chinese authorities were determined to protect their countrymen, whose unenviable life on the plantations was now the subject of frequent dispatches from Consul Lin. He had worn his pen blunt corresponding with the governor on behalf of the labourers, Lin said, but the oppressions continued (RKA 1 June 1911; AA to Rex 11 June 1910; Lin 15 September 1910).

Inspired by Consul Lin's reports, the Chinese government made a new and more far-reaching demand. In December 1910, China asked that Chinese subjects in German Samoa be freed from the “native” legal status which had

bound them since 1905, since it was unjust and “derogatory to the dignity of the Chinese Empire” to include Chinese among what German colonial law called the “coloured tribes” (Chinese Embassy in Berlin 23 December 1910).

Solf returned to Germany on furlough at the end of 1910 determined not to concede legal equality to the Chinese. He met the Chinese Ambassador in Berlin in January 1911 and, by skilful diplomacy and a promise to change Samoa's legislation in such a way as to satisfy Chinese honour, managed to persuade him to recommend to Peking that another expedition of labourers be permitted (Solf 14 December 1910; Solf 26 January 1911). For a moment it looked as if China would be content with a compromise in the form of granting labourers limited right of appeal against convictions, but by April 1911 the Chinese insistence on equality was plain.

All his warnings against small-planter settlement in Samoa were proving justified, Solf reflected, and a series of bankruptcies caused by lack of labour were inevitable. The prospect was not unpleasing to him, and he was confident that the colony would emerge prosperous (Solf 19 April 1911). But it was politically impossible for the Colonial Office to simply abandon the small planters and, despite Solf’s fears that he was signing the Samoans' “death-warrant”, in May 1911 he finally agreed to admit the Chinese labourers to the benefits of European jurisdiction (Solf 28 May 1911; Also quoted in Moses 1973:115).

Meanwhile, the employers in Samoa proposed that the Chinese be given a unique legal status mid-way between Samoans and Europeans (Schultz 22 July 1911; RKA 16 October 1911). It was a vain hope. They had to accept equality and, five months before the fresh expedition of labourers reached the colony in December 1911, dispense with flogging.

The battle that China won in 1911 was not the only one fought by Samoa planters in these years. Their frustrations over the labour issue produced other conflicts with Solf and the Colonial Office. As soon as the German Samoan government published its handbook for 1909/10, the Planters' Association called a meeting to protest the deliberate discouragement it offered to small settlers, and organised the publication of a competing handbook offering the opposite viewpoint, which appeared in June 1910. This complained of the government's unwillingness to help small settlers, the obstructive influence of the DHPG on government land policy and the short-sightedness of artificially protecting the traditional Samoan way of life. It called for the government to open Samoan lands to the white settler, which

would encourage the Samoans to work on the plantations, and asked whether 'Deutschtum' (Germanness) in Samoa was to be represented by privileged companies or by hundreds of German farmers bound to the homeland. The Planters' Association suggested that Chinese labourers who had proved themselves should be allowed to settle in Samoa, and that planters other than the DHPG should have the right to recruit Melanesians from German New Guinea (Pflanzerverein Samoa 1910 passim).

The Planters' Association had already petitioned the Colonial Office for New Guinea labour in February 1910 (Pflanzerverein Samoa 10 February 1910), only to be referred by Berlin to the government of German New Guinea, which was under pressure from planters in its own colony not to yield. German New Guinea's predictable refusal was defended in a government-inspired report in the *Samoanische Zeitung* on 16 July 1910.

Dissension in Samoa was such, a naval commander reported in September, that it was extraordinarily difficult to gain a clear picture of the situation: all informants gave their own subjective judgments.Feelings against Solf were running high among the "small German planters and plantation companies, the small tradespeople and also some representatives of the free professions, such as doctors" (Gühler 7 September 1910).

When the Budget Commission of the Reichstag discussed Samoa in March 1911, Solf was asked to answer charges laid against him by settlers. He was accused of being autocratic, pampering the Samoans, endangering German dominance, influencing the press and favouring the DHPG. In a long speech before the Commission on 24 March, Solf disarmed his Berlin critics. Samoans, he said, were not lazy. The difficulties which the Samoan social system created for the planters could not be legislated away. Samoans had work to do in their own plantations. As for the DHPG, Solf was against taking away its recruiting privilege in New Guinea simply because other Samoa firms did not have it. Extending the privilege was a matter for German New Guinea. Solf claimed that Samoa would never be a country for small settlers because they could not afford the comfort that the white man in the tropics needed in order to avoid sinking to "the level of the natives". Miscegenation and small settlement went "hand in hand" (Budget Commission 24 March 1911). Solf's message was clear: to support the dissidents was to encourage a decline in German racial purity. Furthermore, the small planters were not making profits, in contrast to the DHPG.

By 1912, the Chinese, thanks to the intercession of their government, were better off in three ways: they were protected by a resident consul, no longer subject to corporal punishment and treated as Europeans under German civil law. The 541 Chinese labourers who disembarked on 28 December 1911 enjoyed advantages beyond those guaranteed by the new labour ordinance of 6 January 1912.

“In correct recognition of Samoa's [labour shortage] distress”, the Colonial Office noted, the Chinese authorities had compelled Germany to accept “extraordinarily oppressive stipulations” in the contract of 1911, which required among other things that the Chinese labourers work only in the fields and that they be given five extra holidays a year (RKA 11 March 1912; Schultz 9 January 1912; Schultz 28 February 1912).

Employers found the new dispensation irksome and expensive. Imprisonment, they complained, failed to deter labourers from laziness and deprived plantations of needed hands. The Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft, for example, lost twenty men for three weeks in March 1912 after they were sent to gaol for leaving work without permission. The manager reported to the company's Berlin office that he could no longer instil respect in the workers.

> *Threats as in the good old times, like: “if you don't do that, then...” are not at all suitable anymore because every coolie knows that we cannot prove anything against him. The general view here is that the coolies can be held in check only by thrashing.*

He blamed the abolition of corporal punishment on Solf’s mild treatment of the Samoans, which had served as a precedent for handling the Chinese (DSG 25 March 1912).

The familiar succession of events seemed to be repeating itself in yet more unfavourable form for the employers. Given the task of coming to a definitive agreement with Consul Lin over conditions of employment, the colonial government encountered new demands on the labourers' behalf, many of which were unacceptable to planters. Above all, Lin demanded that Chinese should have full rights to settle, buy land and carry on business in German Samoa. He recommended to the Canton (Guangdong Province) provincial authorities that they insist upon the right of settlement before allowing any more recruiting (Lin 22 December 1911; Lin 11 June 1912; Lin 14 October 1912).

Neither Schultz, who became governor in July 1912, nor the majority of settlers wished to see their colony populated by thousands of time-expired

Chinese labourers. Solf's primary objection as governor had been that Chinese settlers would destroy Samoan traditional society. Schultz's was that they would displace European small traders; he had not forgotten the sight of an abandoned house in Tahiti, shown to him in 1907 for its historical interest as the home of the last European trader before all trade stores became Chinese. Settlers shared this fear and were also afraid, as one planter put it, that the "country would be full of a set of impudent loafers and gamblers" if Chinese labourers were permitted to stay (Schultz 11 August 1909; Schultz 22 July 1911; Schultz 10 July 1912; Harman 9 January 1914).

Once again it appeared that employers would have to concede much simply to stay in business. By early February 1913, the Safata-Samoa-Gesellschaft was unable to raise credit and was in danger of liquidation unless relief contingents arrived to operate its three rubber and cacao plantations. Had Germany been asking more of the Chinese than it could give in return, as in 1911, full rights of settlement might have been the price paid for the seventh expedition of labourers. But the revolution that overthrew the Manchu Dynasty in 1911 and 1912 wrought changes in the Germans' favour.

Publicly, Chinese protestations against the labour trade were louder than ever; in reality both the provincial and central governments in China could only gain from the emigration of some of the demobilised soldiers and poverty-stricken peasants who were now to be seen everywhere in the country. In the second place, Germany did not immediately recognise the new Chinese republic. And though recognition was not explicitly used in bargaining over the labourers, the German ambassador in Peking possibly hinted at it in January 1913 when he told the Chinese that further obstruction in the matter would be seen by Germany as an unfriendly act (Hindorf 6 February 1913; German Consul in Shanghai 21 February 1912; German Consul in Swatow 17 October 1912; Haxthausen 20 January 1913).

Within three weeks of this German warning, the Canton provincial government began to display a new flexibility in the negotiations, and within a month it had made a definite offer which the Samoa planters were quick to accept. Though wages were higher under the 1913 contract, it was in most other respects highly favourable to the employers, and on the issue of settlement rights nothing was said at all (AA 20 March 1913).

The departure of the labourers from Swatow in April 1913 was a scene of tumult. Police were used to stop the bloody fights between men competing for the chance of a job. Nearly 1,500 signed on, of whom only 1,039 could be

accommodated on the steamer. As a result, the consul in Swatow reported, planters got the “better labour-material” because only the healthiest were taken (German Consul in Swatow 30 April 1913). Despite this, smallpox and measles broke out on the voyage and the Chinese spent nearly a month quarantined outside Apia harbour. When they disembarked in June 1913, the chronic lack of labour from which the plantation companies in Samoa had suffered was finally removed.

The expedition of 1913, the last that carried Chinese coolies to German Samoa, was almost twice as large as any preceding it, and the planters and governor were so pleased with the 1913 contract that they wished to make it the basis of the Sino-German treaty. They hoped to use the planned negotiations over the treaty in 1914 to bring yet more benefits to employers, including five-year instead of three-year contracts and a maximum wage (Schultz 12 January 1914). But World War I intervened.

German Samoa never became the home for yeoman farmers, which had been the ideal of the Planters' Association, despite the last-minute reprieve for employers in 1913. The colony's white population had grown from 347 in 1902 to 557 in 1913, a modest increase that fell far short of the dreams of Richard Deeken and his followers. Failed planters were reduced to scratching a living from tiny tradestores and sought solace in the crowded public bars of Apia. Even the larger cacao and rubber producers did not prosper. The Safata-Samoa-Gesellschaft admitted in 1913 that one of its three plantations, Saninoga, which employed 92 Chinese, was so unprofitable that no more capital would be wasted on it (SSG 1913:4). In the same year, the Deutsche Samoa-Gesellschaft lost 253,000 marks on its cacao plantations (DSG 1914:6).

Solf and Schultz prevailed over their opponents for three important reasons. The first is financial. German colonies were supposed to pay for themselves, and a colonial government could afford to discourage tax-paying settlers only if it had an assured source of revenue. Such was the case in German Samoa, the only German colony apart from Togo which achieved financial self-sufficiency. From 1909 onwards the German Samoan government paid the costs of administration entirely from local custom duties, business taxes and the poll tax paid by the Samoans, without need for an imperial subsidy. The European price of copra doubled between 1900 and 1913 and the prosperity generated by the copra trade created rising government income: with more money from the sale of trade copra, for example, the Samoans imported more goods on which they paid duty, and were able to pay higher poll taxes. Solf

claimed the Samoans contributed more to the state per head than the citizens of Prussia (Budget Commission 24 March 1911). The German Samoa government, then, could restrict foreign economic development without endangering its own revenues.

The second reason for Solf's success lies in the way German colonial policy was made. As John Moses said, "the Governor was subject to pressures from Berlin where the *raison d'etre* for colonies was to afford German investment an opportunity for handsome profits" (Moses 1973:105). The company directors of the DHPG were personal friends of key colonial bureaucrats and of Solf himself, who remained an ally of the company when he became Colonial Secretary. This was an advantage that Deeken and other small planters lacked.

The DHPG could thank the Colonial Director from 1900 to 1905, Oskar Stuebel, an old friend who had been the German consul in Apia in the 1880s, for the land policy which prohibited the sale of Samoans' land to foreigners and restricted leasing. As a result of this policy, the DHPG, which held 72,000 acres of spare land, was given a virtual monopoly of land available for sale to foreigners.

And the DHPG owed a debt to Solf for protecting its monopoly of cheap Melanesian labour, the "life-nerve of our company" as the DHPG director H.E. Meyer-Delius called it (3 June 1906). Many of the accusations made against Solf were trifles and gossip, Otto Riedel of the DHPG recalled, "unless one were to take as his principal fault the fact that he did not make life difficult for the largest German company, namely us" (Riedel 1938:190).

Fortunately for Solf, the demands of the small planters ran counter to the interests of the DHPG. To have opened the Samoan land to foreigners would have lowered the scarcity value of company real estate. To have compelled the Samoans to work on plantations would at the very least have deprived the company of its supplies of village trade copra, and probably produced a Samoan rebellion. Unlike the small planters, the DHPG profited from the status quoand had no wish to run the risk of Samoan resistance.

Canvassing the land issue in 1907, the Cyclopedia of Samoa, Tonga, Tahiti, and the Cook Islands echoed the views of the DHPG and the government: "it would be a great mistake to allow the Samoans to sell their country lands and so – as has been the case in the Sandwich Islands – leave themselves without their principal means of subsistence. To have nearly 40,000 paupers in these

islands of a class like the ordinary Samoan would ... create public danger" (McCarron, Stewart & Co 1907:57).

Solf once wrote in jest that a "radical cure" for Samoa would include forced labour and the sale of Samoan lands to colonists (Solf 3 August 1900). Other German colonial governments pursued just such policies elsewhere under pressure from settlers who stood to gain cheap land and labour from the proletarianisation of the colonised people. But in German Samoa the most powerful enterprise, the DHPG, already in possession of vast acreages and an underpaid foreign labour force, and doing good business with the colonised people, had everything to lose from the usual German programme of colonisation.

The third reason for Solf's triumph is China's zealous protection of its citizens. For year after year the Chinese authorities kept planters without enough labourers and required them to make ever more expensive concessions. By their obstruction, the Chinese helped to make Solf's warning about small settlement come true because they deprived the settlers of a vital element in the success of tropical agriculture: cheap labour. As a new colonial power with little of the diplomatic influence enjoyed by countries long active in the Far East such as Britain, France and the Netherlands, Germany was at the mercy of Chinese officials.

The history of German Samoa shows the victory of one idea of German colonisation over another. The Samoan was to be left in his village, not dragooned onto the plantation. The German settler, if not actually rooted out of the tropics as Solf would have liked, was to be officially discouraged from disrupting Samoan life.

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