# The Chinese in Samoa: Settlers, Labourers and Investors

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During the colonial era, Samoa was a major 'importer' of labour, bringing in thousands of Melanesian and Chinese workers. Over the past century, Samoa has moved from importing labour to exporting labour, in changing economic circumstances. This article is about Chinese people's involvement in the labour history of Samoa from the late nineteenth century to the present day. I situate my discussion of the importation of Chinese labour in its broader context of the past 150 years of Chinese settlement and investment in Samoa, and discuss this in relation to four waves of Chinese arrivals in Samoa: early settlers (traders), indentured labourers, family chain migrants and the 'new' Chinese.

## Chinese free settlers: 1840s to 1880

In his overview of Chinese global emigration, Gungwu (1991) suggests four main patterns of Chinese emigration since around 1800, two of which apply to the history of Chinese people in Samoa. The first was the 'trader' pattern, in which merchants and artisans left China to set up businesses overseas. The second was the 'coolie' (indentured labour) pattern, which began around 1850 and ended in the 1930s; this pattern is associated with the colonial plantation mode of production. Hundreds of thousands of landless labourers and urban poor emigrated from China during this period.

In the nineteenth century, Chinese were among the many transient foreigners in the Samoan archipelago. Some were looking for commercial opportunities in Samoa, and many stayed, set up businesses and married Samoan women.

From what we know of the first wave of Chinese settlers, they were successful in their business ventures and thrived economically. This is no surprise, given the cultural value they placed on hard work. In 1880, however,

[19] The present article draws on my article titled 'Reflections on the Experiences of the Chinese Community in Samoa' (Leung Wai 2021). Most of the data on numbers, policies, regulations and dates are from Nancy Tom's *The Chinese in Western Samoa: 1875-1985* (1986) and Stewart Firth's 'Governors Versus Settlers' (1977). I also draw on the histories of my family and other Samoan families with Chinese ancestry. I thank Penelope Schoeffel for her assistance in restructuring and editing my 2021 article to create this one.

the first wave of Chinese settlement in Samoa ended when European and American settlers pressured the King, Malietoa Laupepa, to pass a law forbidding the entry of Chinese people into the country (Tom 1986). This antipathy was not merely racist; some of the Europeans and Americans in Samoa no doubt saw Chinese as significant and unwanted competition. It was well known to cosmopolitan settlers that Chinese businesses dominated trading ports of Asia and were established long before the European colonial era (Firth 1977).

## Chinese indentured labourers: 1903 to 1934

In the early 1900s, a plantation economy had become well established in the Samoa archipelago's western islands of Upolu and Savaii, and plantations covered 7,773 acres (Firth 1977). The largest planter company in the Samoan archipelago was Deutsch Handels und Planatagen Gesellschaft (DHPG), which had plantations covering 4,933 acres (Moses 1973).

During the German administration of Samoa (1900–1914), a labour shortage on plantations arose, which was largely due to the administration's active discouragement of the recruitment of Samoan labour. This policy of Governors Solf and Schultz was partly because they sought to avoid conflicts like those of the 1800s (see Meleisea 1980; 1987), but it also reflected their reliance on the copra produced for export by Samoans on their customary land (see Stewart Firth's article in this volume). In addition, some foreigners at the time believed that it was "impossible for the Samoan to fit into the role of a steady plantation workman because he has no conception of western industrial life" (Decker 1940:88).

Another key factor behind the labour shortage in Samoa was that small planter-settlers were not permitted to import workers. There was a ban on importing Chinese workers (since 1880) and there was a ban on the labour trade in German colonies outside the "Protectorate of the New Guinea Company". Only the DHPG was exempt from this ban, so it had a monopoly in Samoa on importing and employing Melanesian workers (Firth 1977; see also Firth's article in this volume).

In an attempt to resolve the issue, the small planter-settlers in Samoa formed a consortium to demand the right to import workers from China. When the administration refused, Chinese 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 on the virtues of replacing them with Melanesian or Samoan workers, reflecting two opposing views about what kind of colony German Samoa ought to be (Firth 1977:156).*

The German administration ultimately gave in to pressure from settlers and allowed the importation of Chinese labourers. The first batch of 289 Chinese workers (labourers, overseers and tailors) arrived in 1903 from Swatow, Fukien (Fujian) Province (Tom 1986).

Over the decade between 1903 and 1913, a total of 3,868 Chinese labourers were brought to Samoa. The figures each year were as follows: 1903 (289), 1905 (528), 1906 (575) and 1908 (351), 1909 (535), 1911 (551) and 1913 (139) (Tom 1986; see also Firth 1977).

Chinese workers were lured to sign on as indentured labourers by posters portraying Chinese men sitting in rickshaws being fanned by Samoan women and by images of Chinese labourers arriving in Samoa and being greeted by Chinese women (Liua'ana 1997 as cited in Noa Siaosi 2010). This image was far from the reality they experienced when they arrived in Samoa.

As Firth (1977) documents, Chinese labourers were expected to work long hours, six days a week, and were initially paid only ten marks per month (the equivalent of about USD2.40 at the time). The advice of the then editor of the *Samoanische Zeitung* newspaper to plantation owners to treat the Chinese labourers well was ignored. Flogging was allowed (once a week with a maximum of 20 lashes per person) and could result from "hiding, laziness, running away, disobedience, insulting behaviour, breaking the curfew, and leaving the plantation without permission" (Firth 1977:166). Workers were even punished for not bowing "low enough in respect of their masters" (Firth 1977:166). Chinese workers also faced sanctions (fines and imprisonment) for breach of certain clauses of their employment contracts. Some of the rules they had to abide by are similar to those imposed today on seasonal workers from Pacific Island countries in New Zealand and Australia.

When the Chinese government received reports of the harsh working conditions and ill-treatment of its citizens working in German Samoa, it considered banning further recruitment. The German administration consequently improved the terms of employment for Chinese workers and intervened to stop employers from using flogging as a punishment. In 1909,

China sent over a consul (Lin Jun Chao) to look after the interests of Chinese labourers (Firth 1977). The interests of Chinese workers were therefore much better protected that those of the Melanesians, whose labour they were supplementing (Meleisea 1980).

Chinese settlers, with the support of the Chinese government, subsequently successfully petitioned Governor Solf of the German administration to be treated as equal to other foreign residents, and some were allowed to continue to live in Samoa and operate their businesses (Tom 1986).

When World War I broke out in 1914, New Zealand replaced the German administration, and this new administration, run by the military, commenced the wholesale repatriation of Chinese labourers. Between 1914 and 1918 three major repatriations took place, which reduced the Chinese labour force in Samoa to about 832 (Decker 1940:92). This created a new labour shortage and angered the planters, who were already struggling because of plant diseases and pests. The demands by planters for the return of Chinese labourers were initially ignored because British policy, which influenced the New Zealand administration in Samoa, was to abolish Chinese indentured labour in colonies in Asia and Africa. However, a compromise was eventually reached to stop mass repatriation, and some of the Chinese labourers still in Samoa were re-hired for the duration of the war (Decker 1940:93).

In 1920, just before a civilian administration replaced the military administration of Samoa, 502 Chinese labourers were brought into the country (Decker 1940:92). Many more Chinese labourers followed: 1921 (959), 1925 (280), 1926 (180), 1928 (456), 1930 (251), 1931 (207) and 1934 (281) (Tom 1986:36).

The indentured labour system in Samoa was heavily criticised by the Labour party (in opposition) in the New Zealand Parliament at the time (Decker 1940). In 1923, the New Zealand administration consequently changed the indentured labour system to a policy of “free labour” through passing the Chinese Free Labour Ordinance 1923 (Decker 1940). This change resulted in higher wages and allowed the Chinese labourers to change employers, with agreement from the Chinese commissioner. Any surplus of Chinese labourers was absorbed by the New Zealand administration. The new system also removed the archaic criminal penalty of a fine or imprisonment for breach of a term of the employment contract (Decker 1940:96-98). However, the new system did not make allowances for sickness and bad weather, and a

percentage of the workers' wages was deducted to cover medical care (Decker 1940:107).

Eventually, fears of 'yellow peril' brought the Chinese labour trade in the Pacific into decline. In the 1920s, anti-Chinese activism in Australia and New Zealand was spearheaded by the Labour parties and trade unions of these countries, which feared that Chinese would work for lower wages than white men and threaten their livelihoods (O'Connor 1968).

Repatriation at the end of the contract period, at the cost of the employer, was clearly spelled out in the Chinese labourers' employment contracts. The German administration did not actively enforce the repatriation of the Chinese labourers, however. The repatriation rate during the German administration was about 44 percent, with 1,684 of 3,868 labourers repatriated. New Zealand's military administration in Samoa was more active in its repatriation policy, with a repatriation rate around 57 percent (Tom 1986:7). The civilian administration was also active, but it allowed some labourers with good records to be re-engaged and even gave some labourers restricted free settler status (Decker 1940).

My great-grandfather Leung Wai was among the fortunate ones not repatriated. The reason was that he sought the help of one of the Tama Aiga (sons of the great families), high chief Afioga Mataafa Faumuina Mulinuu I. The Chinese commissioner had nominated Leung Wai, along with several other Chinese, to be granted restricted free settler status in 1923 by the then Chief Administrator, General George Richardson. This status meant Leung Wai was able to freely operate his businesses in Samoa and own property.

During the German administration, laws were passed to restrict the movement of Chinese labourers and to keep Samoan women off the plantations, with the aim of preventing relationships developing between Chinese and Samoans (Decker 1940). In spite of this, in 1916 about a hundred Chinese labourers were married to, or in de facto relationships with, Samoans, and at the time there were more than a hundred Chinese-Samoan children (Field 1991:31).

The New Zealand administration also sought to avoid intermarriage between Chinese and Samoans (Field 1991) and set regulations accordingly. For example, Proclamation 42, issued on 30 January 1917, prohibited Chinese indentured labourers from entering a Samoan house. It was also an offence for Samoans to allow Chinese labourers to enter their houses. Any person who breached this law was liable to a maximum fine of 5 pounds or a maximum

imprisonment with labour of six weeks. Another proclamation prevented Samoan women from visiting the quarters of Chinese labourers (Decker 1940).

New Zealand passed a law in 1921 that was described by a historian to be "one of the most shameful pieces of legislation ever to be passed into New Zealand law" (Field 1991:57). This law, in section 300 of the Constitution Order, prohibited Chinese immigrants and indentured labourers from marrying Samoan women. The penalty for breaching the law was a fine of 20 pounds or six months' imprisonment (Field 1991).

Following the passing of this law, the Samoan central native administration issued a decree for Samoan women to leave their Chinese husbands and return to their Samoan relatives. This was followed by Samoan villages passing regulations to ban cohabitation between Chinese labourers and Samoan women (Hiery 1995).

Despite opposition from the New Zealand administration, many Samoan families saw Chinese husbands as good matches for their daughters and were not opposed to intermarriage (Pacific Islands Monthly 1939; Field 1991:55). By 1930, the number of Samoans with Chinese ancestry was between 1,000 and 1,500 (Rowe 1930 as cited in Meleisea 1987:172). However, some Samoans demonstrated anti-Chinese sentiment during the colonial era (Hiery 1995; Meleisea 1980 and 1987).

The law against intermarriage was in force for over forty years. Despite the law, intermarriage continued. In 1939, for example, the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (15 July) reported that 34 Chinese labourers and their Samoan wives had been imprisoned for breaching the law. The men were imprisoned for three months while the women served three days. The law was finally removed in 1961 by the passing of the Marriage Ordinance, which legalised such marriages and gave legitimacy to children from them.

The Samoa Immigration Order of 1930, requiring the repatriation of labourers brought in under any scheme, led to many Chinese labourers being forcefully repatriated from 1934 onwards (Tom 1986). This repatriation policy was put forward amid outcries in New Zealand about Chinese and Melanesians polluting the 'pure Samoan race', a racist delusion that ignored the fact that Samoans had been intermarrying with foreigners for the past century and more (Field 1991:217; Hiery 1995). Indeed, unions between Samoans and Europeans were commonplace. According to some, such unions were acceptable because the children from these unions were perceived as

being “fair skinned and of Aryan stock” (Rowe 1930 as cited in Meleisea 1987:172).

Forced repatriation of Chinese in the 1930s was probably also driven by the fear that the Chinese would dominate many businesses in Samoa due to their motivation and hard work, as exemplified by the Ah Ching and Ah Sue families.

In December 1937, about 168 Chinese labourers who were employed as “domestic servants, artisans, and labourers on plantations other than cocoa plantations” were sent back to China (Decker 1940:115). After that, only 326 Chinese labourers remained in Samoa.

While some Chinese were happy to return to China, others wanted to remain in Samoa, especially those who had married Samoans and had children. Despite these labourers’ strong connections to Samoa, this did not discourage the New Zealand administration from its policy of returning Chinese labourers to China. Some Chinese labourers begged to stay, but in most cases even Chinese with Samoan families were denied the right to remain. Samoan wives were not allowed to accompany their husbands to China because their union was considered illegal at the time (Tom 1986:85-86). Some of those repatriated to China took their sons with them. This caused great sorrow for their Samoan families.

The forced repatriation of Chinese labourers is a sad chapter in Samoa’s history, particularly as it resulted in many Chinese-Samoan children growing up without their fathers. In addition, many Chinese-Samoans were saddened at not being able to locate or trace their Chinese families. Many descendants of Chinese labourers visited my Chinese grandmother during her lifetime to get her help in tracing their Chinese ancestors’ origins, but no proper records relating to their identification could be found. It did not help that employment contracts and letters exchanged between government officials and employers mostly referred to Chinese labourers by their coolie numbers rather than by their names. For example, Yue Yiek was recorded as “Coolie No. 398” (Tom 1986:18-20). If names were recorded, normally it was only the surnames; the first names were not listed, and the surnames had been converted into English transliterations, such as Ah Fook and Ah Chong (Tom 1986). Converting the names back into Chinese script was impossible for most Samoans at the time.

The Samoa Immigration Order 1930 was amended in 1947, allowing the administrator to change the immigration status for those Chinese deemed deserving to stay in Samoa. However, in mid-1948, 104 of the remaining

Chinese labourers were repatriated, leaving around 90, who then became lawful permanent residents and later citizens of Samoa with the right to vote (Tom 1986:85-86). Chinese who had already been granted free settler status also remained. Records from 1951 show that 160 Chinese people in Samoa were eligible to vote for the 'European' seats in parliament (Tom 1986:63). By 1985, Samoa had only thirty-two surviving Chinese indentured labourers (Tom 1986:71).

Samoa's plantation industry never recovered from the loss of imported labour, and it is likely that many businesses in New Zealand and Australia that are today reliant on imported labour would also decline without those workers.

## Family chain migrants: 1950 to 1999

The third wave of Chinese migration mainly involved immigrants who had blood connections to Chinese-Samoans in Samoa. Most of these Chinese migrated to Samoa to find better opportunities and to help the businesses of their Chinese relatives already living in Samoa. Such immigrants included my grandfather, who was born in Samoa (to a Samoan mother) but had been sent to China for education at the tender age of 8. He returned to Samoa with his (Chinese) wife (my grandmother) and my father (their only surviving child born in China) in 1950. Other Chinese immigrants who arrived during this period included family members of the Wong Kees, Chan Mows, Lee Hangs, Chen Paos, Rongs, Locks, Cais and others.

Besides family chain migrants, in the 1980s and 1990s a small number of Chinese from Hong Kong immigrated to Samoa because of their concerns over what would happen when China resumed control of Hong Kong in 1997. While some of the Chinese who came in this wave chose to make Samoa their home, others chose either to return to Hong Kong or to migrate to other countries, such as New Zealand.

Those who stayed assimilated into Samoan society, especially the ones who married Samoans. The majority showed respect for the laws of Samoa. Most became Christians and their applications for Samoan citizenship were supported by pastors from the churches they attended. Some attended church in order to learn more about the Samoan people or to learn English. In discussions with me, they claimed that they did not experience any racism from the Samoans and found assimilation easy. They reported that they love

living in Samoa and only return now and then to China to visit family members there.

One of the most successful of the third wave of Chinese migration is Frankie Cai. He arrived in 1992 from Guangzhou, China, with the aim of helping his uncle to run his business. He married a Samoan named Mayday and they had two children. Today they own and operate “Frankies”, a business that encompasses a mall as well as wholesale stores and supermarkets around Samoa.

## The ‘new’ Chinese: 2000 to the present

The fourth wave of Chinese migration has included the immigration of both Chinese with relatives in Samoa along with an increasing number of Chinese who do not have relatives in the country. Some of the latter may have originally come to the country as workers on construction projects funded by the People’s Republic of China, but most such workers return to China upon the completion of these projects.

While some of the present wave’s Chinese immigrants come directly from China, others come via Tonga and American Samoa, where they had previously resided. Some of the new immigrants do not have any family in Samoa have gone into the wholesale business while others work for or have established construction companies, for example, Zheng Construction and Qing Dao Construction. The Chinese immigrants who have relatives in Samoa normally end up working for their relatives.

Between 2011 and 2015, 1,573 Chinese citizens were granted permits to enter Samoa (Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, nd). Almost half (723) of those who arrived during this four-year period came to work on projects funded by the Chinese government, while 50 Chinese citizens received business investor permits. Most of the remaining permits were issued to Chinese citizens who came for employment, to visit families or because they were dependents.

The Foreign Investment Act 2000 (Government of Samoa 2000) prohibits foreigners from owning or operating businesses reserved for citizens of Samoa, including retail shops, transport services (taxis, buses and rental cars) and traditional garment printing companies. Therefore, most immigrants from the fourth wave of Chinese migration are prevented from owning such businesses. Instead, some Chinese immigrants lease shops from Samoans.

Chinese immigrants who arrived in earlier waves have criticised those who came in this fourth wave of migration. One criticism is that many of the new immigrants have not assimilated into Samoan society. This is evidenced by the fact that most 'new' Chinese immigrants have not married Samoans. A related criticism is that some of these 'new' Chinese do not respect or appreciate the Samoan culture and way of life, and therefore appear rude to Samoans. In turn, the Samoans do not respect them and therefore tease them. This is causing suffering among the 'old' Chinese immigrants. For example, a Chinese man who arrived in the 1990s (third wave) said he no longer feels comfortable going to the food market in Apia because of the taunts and teasing he receives from Samoans. He believes it is because they mistake him for a 'new' Chinese immigrant. He remarked that if he speaks Samoan the teasing stops, and the Samoans usually end up apologising to him.

The 'new' Chinese are also criticised for being opportunistic and aggressive in their business tactics. Some have broken the law and have been deported (Radio New Zealand 15 February 2012) and one man fled Samoa after being charged with a serious sexual offence. Other 'new' Chinese immigrants have been criticised for alleged involvement in businesses reserved only for Samoan citizens (Radio New Zealand 18 April 2011), for operating businesses without a licence (Samoa Observer 25 August 2021) and for only employing Chinese people in their businesses (Papua New Guinea Today 29 January 2017). Some have been jailed for operating scams (Talanei.com 26 September 2017).

## The success of Chinese settlers and their descendants in Samoa

While Chinese immigrants to Samoa have faced hardships, their work ethic, perseverance and respect for Samoa's law and culture have, at least until recently, enabled them to successfully assimilate into Samoan society.

The Chinese indentured labourers who succeeded in remaining in Samoa contributed to the development of the economy through their work in plantations and by establishing their own plantations, and also through their business activities. Chinese business owners such as Chan Mow, Fong and Leung Wai, for example, came to be accepted by Samoans as their own. This was helped by the fact that they married Samoans and had children who identified themselves as Samoans (with Chinese ancestry).

Chinese people who settled in Samoa in the period before the German annexation (1900) — during the first wave of Chinese migration — include Ah

Sue, Ah Fook, Ah Soon, Ah Kiau, Ah Yen, Ah You, Ah Chong, Ah Gee and Ah Man, many of whom still have descendants in Samoa.

Ah Sue was one of the first Chinese free settlers. He was a cook, box maker and shop owner. His son later became the publisher and editor of the *Samoanische Zeitung* newspaper, which was Apia's bilingual German and English weekly paper during the German administration. Another early settler was Ah Ching, who was originally from Fukien (Fujian) Province in China. He left China in his teens as a crew member on a small trading schooner and spent ten years sailing the South Seas before deciding to settle in Samoa. He married Fa'atupu Leiataualetaua Leota, the daughter of a chief from Manono and had ten children. He initially struggled with starting his own business but later became a successful proprietor of three stores and a bakery, and he came to own a lot of property, including ten acres of land at Vailoa. One of his shops was in Samoa's central business district, and he is remembered for starting a Traders' Association with Chinese, American and European traders. His sent three of his sons (Arthur, Avoki and Edward) and a daughter (Bertha) to China for their education. Arthur, Avoki and Bertha returned to Samoa, but Edward died in China. Muagututagata Joe Ah Ching, a son of Avoki, holds a high chiefly title from the village of Malie and is also an accountant and successful businessman in his own right. His brother, Salausa Dr John Ah Ching, is a medical doctor whose son is a dentist. Another successful descendant of Ah Ching is Judge Bernice Ah Ching, who resides in Utah, United States of America (USA). Bernice's father is Vena Ah Ching, a son of Arthur Ah Ching.

Another Chinese free settler who came to Samoa in the first wave of Chinese migration was Ah Mu. He arrived in around 1875. He had been 'adopted' by British sailors at a very young age when their vessel called into a Chinese port. When he got tired of travelling with the British Navy, he decided to settle in Samoa. He started a carting and transporting business before expanding into other areas such as repairing wheels and shoeing horses; then he acquired a dairy and a Ford car dealership. Although he was originally a Catholic, Ah Mu was instrumental in bringing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) to Samoa and was the first Chinese person to be a Mormon in Samoa. It is said that he provided land while Ah Ching provided the finance for the LDS Church. Currently, the LDS Church owns a large block of land at Pesega where it houses its temple, school, flats and sports field. Most of this land was gifted by Ah Mu to the Church. A private primary school,

Ah Mu Academy, located at Pesega, is named after this famous Chinese settler. One of Ah Mu's grandsons (M. Ah Mu) fought in the First World War, serving in France and Palestine. One of Ah Mu's well-known descendants is Hon. Hans Joe Keil, a former Cabinet Minister and a successful businessman. He owns a television station (TV3) and many other businesses. Some descendants of Ah Mu have used "Rivers" as their surname. One such descendant is Constance Tafua-Rivers, a senior lawyer.

Other families with Chinese ancestry that have been successful in business include the Ah Liki, Chan Mow and Ah Mu families, to name a few. The Ah Liki family owns a commercial bank, construction companies, a chain of supermarkets, hardware stores and an alcohol and beverage factory, among other businesses. The Chan Mow family owns key properties, including malls and rental buildings, and also operates one of the largest supermarkets and wholesale stores in Samoa.

Other successful descendants of Chinese immigrants include Pat Lam, a former captain of the Samoan national rugby team (Manu Samoa), and Brian Lima, who competed in five consecutive Rugby World Cups for Samoa and was the first Samoan to be inducted into the Rugby Hall of Fame. His father is accountant Tuliaupupu Pala Lima. Other successful Samoan sportsmen descended from Chinese immigrants include Tana Umaga, who was the captain of the New Zealand national rugby team (the All Blacks), and Louis Chan Tung, who is known for being one of Samoa's fastest runners. As a teenager in the 1970s Louis ran the 100-metre dash in 10.6 seconds and went to the USA for sprint training. Another famous sportsman with Chinese ancestry is Bee Leung Wai (my father), who is the only Samoan to date to have won gold medals in weightlifting for three consecutive decades.

Chinese who arrived in the third wave of migration have also represented Samoa in the international sports arena. These include Frankie Cai, who competed in badminton and table tennis tournaments; Kenny Cai who competed in table tennis tournaments; and Joe Zhou and Ming Han Chan who competed in weightlifting events. Joe Zhou was in the Chinese national weightlifting team before migrating to Samoa.

Samoans with Chinese ancestry have held seats in every parliamentary term since Samoa gained independence in 1962. In 2017, about 20 percent of Samoa's members of parliament were of Chinese ancestry, including two Cabinet Ministers. As for the legal profession, many lawyers and one Supreme Court judge in Samoa are descendants of Chinese immigrants.

The Chinese have also contributed to Samoan culture. Many dishes that are considered to be Samoan have Chinese origins. For example, *sapa sui,* which is a version of the Chinese dish "chop suey", *keke pua'a* (a version of "cha siu bao"), *keke saina* (Chinese cake), *masi saina* (Chinese biscuits), *alaisa* (rice) and *falai fuamoa* (a version of "egg foo yung").

## We are all Samoans

Samoan society is very inclusive, in that marriage of Samoans with persons from other ethnicities is generally accepted, including marriage with Chinese. The children from these unions are seen as Samoans and are accepted by Samoans as their own.

Assimilation of Chinese settlers has not been so successful in some other Pacific Island states. For example in Tonga, where some Chinese-run shops were burned down during anti-government riots in 2006, and in the Solomon Islands where Chinese-owned businesses were destroyed during ethnic conflict between people of the Malaita and Guadalcanal Islands.

While Samoans can be ethnocentric, this is not considered acceptable behaviour. I recall a story told by my grandfather about a relative who had married a foreigner and whose children were often harassed by their Samoan cousins. The high chief of our family at the time told the Samoan children not to harass their cousins because "*ua namu Samoa tamaiti*" (literally "these children smelled Samoan"), meaning that the children of the intermarriage were also Samoan and should not be discriminated against.

This sentiment was echoed by Samoa's former Prime Minister, Tuila'epa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi, who remarked in a speech in parliament on 19 February 2015 that the majority of those in parliament, including the Prime Minister himself, were descendants of various ethnic groups. He said that this is a good thing and emphasised that Samoans should have zero tolerance for racism (Government of Samoa 2015). We are all Samoans, and we value and respect our mixed ancestry, including our Chinese ancestry, for its contribution to us and to our country.

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