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Labour Mobility in Samoa: Past and Present (Part 1)

Contents

Two Hundred Years of Labour Mobility in Samoa: An Overview

Kalissa Alexeyeff, [1] *Penelope Schoeffel and Malama Meleisea*

This collection of articles, titled *Labour Mobility in Samoa: Past and Present (Part 1 and Part 2),* compiled in two issues of the *Journal of Samoan Studies*, aims to contextualise the current Samoan labour mobility boom in terms of Samoa's labour history and the country's socioeconomic situation and examines the impact of labour mobility on Samoa's labour market and on families and communities in Samoa.

This collection covers two aspects of labour movement in Samoa's history. Part 1 examines inward labour migration, from the colonial era to the present day. Part 2 explores outward labour migration, both short-term and long-term, including temporary seafaring contracts, cannery work in American Samoa, the migration chain in New Zealand and the labour mobility schemes in Australia and New Zealand.

Taken together, the two parts demonstrate that the Samoan economy has relied on labour mobility since colonial times. This reflects a broader trend in the Pacific and globally where outward labour mobility has been a key feature of economies in the Global South, while elsewhere labour has been imported to fill gaps.

What emerges in our investigation of this multi-directional exchange is a complex picture where individuals, families and communities benefit from the higher wages that can be earned by workers abroad, but where individuals are separated from their families and way of life, and where they have limited capacity to resist the potentially exploitative conditions abroad.

We aim in this collection to extend and deepen understanding of labour mobility schemes by focusing on the broader social context, which includes both emigration for Samoans and Samoa's importation of labour from countries such as China and Fiji. The focus on a single country's response to labour mobility provides a unique longitudinal focus to understand the

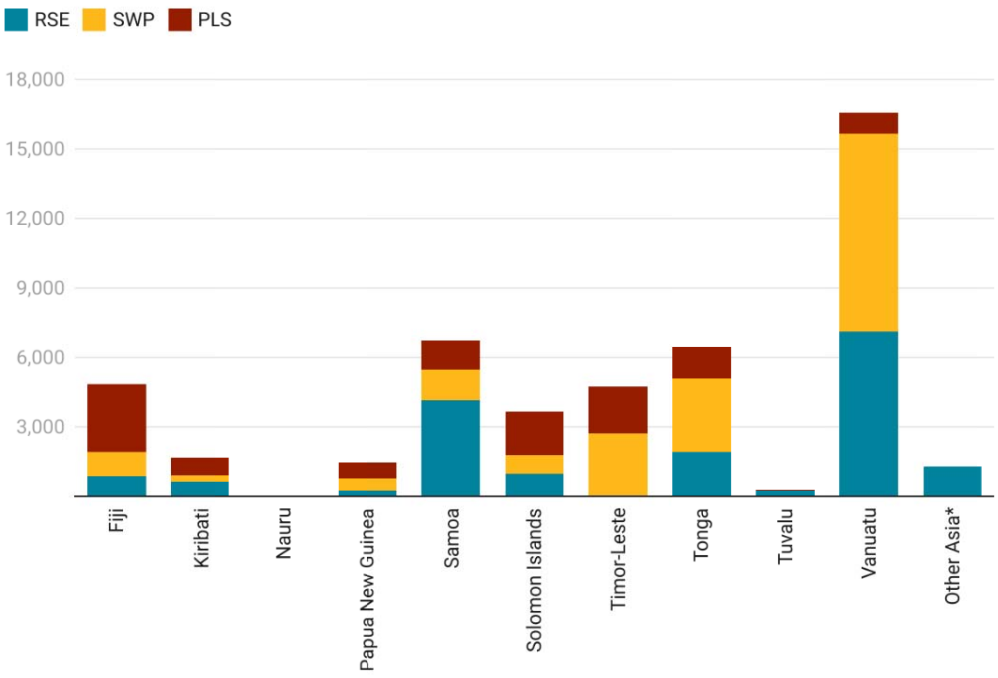
[1] A number of articles in this collection were supported by Kalissa Alexeyeff's Australian Research Council Future Fellowship grant (FT FT140100299), "New Regional Labour Circuits in the South Pacific: Gender, Culture and Transnationalism," undertaken at the University of Melbourne. Publishing support was provided by the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne.

complex amalgam of gains and losses to individuals, families, communities and the national economy.

Studies of labour mobility in the Pacific region as a whole provide useful comparative background to the articles in this collection. The focus of much of the region's literature related to labour mobility is on the impacts of Aotearoa New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme (Government of New Zealand nd) and the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme and their antecedents (Government of Australia nd).

Figures from 2023 show that Samoa is the second largest supplier of labour across both the RSE scheme and the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) – the precursor to the PALM (see Figure 1). For both Australia and New Zealand, Vanuatu is the main supplier and Tonga the third largest supplier of labour (Bedford 2023).

Figure 1: Sources of RSE, SWP and PLS workers 2022-2023 (Bedford 2023)



** Other Asia includes: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam*

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In common with the articles in this collection, most of the literature on the New Zealand and Australia labour mobility schemes indicates that these schemes are a mixed blessing. On one hand they provide individuals and source countries with much needed injections of cash via workers sending remittances and savings home. On the other hand, the workers and their communities are often impacted negatively. Other studies have tended to focus on the issue of exploitation of labour migrants in receiving countries. This includes restrictive working conditions, hidden salary deductions and racism (for an overview of the impacts of labour mobility schemes see for example, Petrou and Connell 2023a and 2023b; Stead and Petrou 2023; Howes, Curtain and Sharman 2022; Sharman and Howes 2022; Bedford, Bedford and Nunns 2020; Nishitani and Lee 2019; Underhill and Marsters 2017; Connell 2010). Those studies have also focused more on the overall socioeconomic trends rather than the motivations of workers and the opinions of workers and communities regarding the labour mobility schemes.

In this collection of articles, the authors record the voices of the workers who go abroad. Our privileging of these voices – the perspectives of individuals – is a significant contribution to studies in this area. Two of the articles are based on interviews with over fifty people who had been employed on labour mobility schemes.[2] The responses are, in the main, highly ambivalent. On the positive side, the interviewees enjoyed earning wages that were often at least four times as high as wages at home, which helped them to send money home and purchase goods such as cars and housing appliances that afforded them greater comfort and higher status in their families and communities. At the same time, however, most of the workers found the schemes to be highly disruptive to their family lives, with so much time away from their children and with many missed events, including, in some cases, the funerals of parents. Some workers also found the experience to be exploitative in terms of the demands made by the employers and deductions from their pay.

One of the articles in this collection, 'Impacts of Labour Mobility Schemes on Samoa's Labour Market', examines how labour mobility has affected Samoa's economy and society. One such impact is the reduced availability of skilled labour in Samoa. From interviews with employers in Samoa it appears that

[2] Rather than older Samoan and foreign researchers conducting the interviews, with potential issues of hierarchy and language, these interviews were conducted between peers and in the Samoan language (the responses were transcribed into English).

while labour mobility schemes are supposed to result in a 'brain gain', with greater levels of skill and experience flowing back to Samoa with the return of workers, the reality is the opposite. The responses by the employers indicate that the net effect of these schemes is actually a 'brain drain', with the most responsible and well-trained workers being the most likely to be successful in applying to participate in the schemes (see Curtain 2022) and with few skilled workers returning. One employer interviewed in our study pithily stated that the workers most wanted in Samoa are the ones who get chosen to go abroad.

Labour mobility over the centuries

Samoa has a long history of voyaging. The Samoan archipelago was settled several thousand years ago, and Samoans traded with nearby island groups for centuries. As Salesa (2003) wrote:

> *Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Samoans were in regular contact with neighbouring islanders. Like other Pacific Islanders they were voyagers: witness 4000 years of Pacific maritime history and the thousands of square kilometres of far-flung Pacific settlement. In a sense the Samoan present echoes this past.*

In the sixteenth century, Europeans began exploring the Pacific region, and in the eighteenth century they came in contact with Samoans. From the early nineteenth century, trader and settler communities from Europe began to influence chiefly rivalry in Samoa, resulting in recurrent civil wars. This, along with the adoption of Christianity, gradually transformed Samoa's political system.

In 1900 the Samoan archipelago was divided between the United States and Germany, with the former taking the eastern islands (American Samoa) and the latter taking the western islands (Samoa).[3] With the onset of World War II in 1914, New Zealand seized Samoa under military rule. From 1921 Samoa was governed by New Zealand under a United Nations Trusteeship. Samoans campaigned for independence from the 1920s onwards, and this struggle was eventually resolved with provisions for limited self government in the 1950s. In 1962 Samoa became the first Pacific Island nation to gain independence.

In the days when Samoa had no contact with cultures beyond the Pacific Islands, there was no concept of paid employment; people worked for their

[3] A map of the Independent State of Samoa can be found at World Atlas: https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/samoa

families and families for their chiefs, and their tasks depended on their sex, social status and age. Labour was exchanged reciprocally between families for major tasks, but workers did not receive individual rewards. As seen in the articles in this collection, work was, and to some extent still is, perceived as service (*tautua*) and was seen both as a moral value and a pathway to future authority, as expressed in the Samoan proverb: "*O le ala 'i le pule o le tautua*" (the way to leadership is through service).

The first Samoans to undertake wage labour as individuals were probably those who, from the 1820s onwards, joined the crews of whaling and trading ships. It is unknown how many did this, but one famous individual was Siovili (also known as Joe Gimlet). In the 1820s he travelled to Tonga and then on to Tahiti with a trading ship (Robson 2009). He became well-known because he founded a short-lived syncretic Samoan/Christian religion on his return, which was conceived from his own religious beliefs and his encounter with Christian missionary teaching in Tahiti (see Freeman 1959). It is unknown how many Samoans continued to travel abroad for work on ships over the following century, but it is likely that many did. Others worked for payment for the growing number of foreign settlers in Samoa as a means of obtaining imported goods (such as tinned food, clothing and tobacco) for family use and for church offerings.

In all likelihood, few Samoans worked abroad in the period between 1900 and the end of World War II, although on several occasions Germans took Samoan performing groups to tour Germany until 1914 (Arora 2014; Salesa 2003).

Samoa's modern labour history began during colonial times when, as Stewart Firth explains in the first article of this collection, the German governors had to decide what kind of colony Samoa would be. Was it to be a colony of white settlement – like New Zealand, New Caledonia or Australia for instance – where white immigrants would drive the Samoans from their land, making them a 'rural proletariat' as the settlers demanded, or would white settlement be discouraged and the Samoan way of life be protected? The governors chose to do what was in the interests of a large German plantation corporation operating in Samoa. It had already acquired most of Samoa's prime agricultural land (Ward and Ashcroft 1998) and was able to recruit the labour it needed from other German colonies in the Pacific and, eventually, also hire Chinese labourers. The complaints made by Chinese labourers at this time included long working hours, wage deductions and unpaid sick days:

complaints that are echoed today by Samoa's labour migrants abroad. The first article in this collection also describes the Chinese government's measures to protect their citizens. This active intervention of the Chinese government offers a salutary example to labour-sending countries today.

In the second article, Malama Meleisea recounts the experiences of four Melanesian men from the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago (today part of Papua New Guinea) who worked in the colonial plantations in Samoa in the early 1900s. They sought this work because they desired to see the world beyond their island homes and to acquire goods that would raise their status in their home communities. It is striking how similar their motives were for signing on for plantation work to those of Samoan workers who sign on to work on temporary contracts in New Zealand, Australia, American Samoa and on ships today.

Ming Leung Wai's account, in the third article, of the waves of Chinese who came to Samoa, the so-called 'coolies',[4] illustrates how labour mobility by Chinese and their assimilation into Samoan life have contributed to Samoa over the years.

Under the New Zealand administration (1914-1962), Samoans were increasingly recruited for plantation work. The German plantations appropriated by New Zealand after World War I were transferred to Samoa in 1962 by New Zealand, but they never recovered their early prosperity; this was partly due to a lack of cheap labour.

In the fourth article, Masami Tsujita presents the voices of recent immigrants who have come to Samoa from elsewhere in the Global South in search of opportunities not available to them in their homelands.

In the post-colonial era, migration and international aid combined to form Samoa's MIRAB (Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy) economy, discussed by Penelope Schoeffel in the article titled 'The Socioeconomic Context of the New Samoan Exodus: 2007–2023'. As noted in that article, the forces of migration and remittances impacted village life, amplifying traditional cultural practices, with significant amounts of money flowing in that was spent on larger-scale traditional gift exchange ceremonies and church-related activities. And with these remittances Samoans also built houses with imported materials and acquired consumer goods. Giving large

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

and expensive gifts and building family houses in a 'European' style allowed families to assert status beyond that accorded them in traditional hierarchies.

From the 1950s, Samoans began to go abroad in search of adventure and higher wages. Most of the early Samoan labour migrants went to New Zealand, as documented by Cluny Macpherson and La'avasa Macpherson in the sixth article of this collection, and to American Samoa, as discussed by Brian Alofaituli in the seventh article.

A Treaty of Friendship established between New Zealand and Samoa in 1962 allowed a quota of 1,100 visas[5] to be issued each year to Samoans who were of working age and good character and who had found guaranteed and suitably renumerated jobs in New Zealand. Each year, Samoans wanting to migrate to New Zealand under the quota must enter a visa 'lottery', which many do, most unsuccessfully.

Unlike citizens of other New Zealand territories inherited from Britain (Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau), Samoans were not given the right to live and work in New Zealand (Brookfield 1981). This was challenged under the British Nationality and New Zealand Citizenship Act 1948, which provided that British subjects and their male heirs who had been born in Western Samoa would become New Zealand citizens. The Act was intended to enable the New Zealand naturalization of non-Samoans resident in Samoa, not native Samoans, but when the New Zealand government sought to deport a Samoan woman, Falema'i Lesa, from New Zealand, her lawyers successfully appealed to the British Privy Council in 1982 for her right to New Zealand citizenship under the 1948 Act. Dismayed, the governments of New Zealand and Samoa hastily and controversially revoked any such legal provision, thus depriving Samoans born between 1924 and 1948 and their children of New Zealand citizenship rights, although Samoans who were in New Zealand at that time automatically gained New Zealand citizenship.

In the 1970s, Samoans began receiving training for work on international cruise and cargo container ships, and such work opportunities have expanded since then, as explored by Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel in the article, 'Samoans at Sea: Seasonal Work on Ships'.

Labour migration in the post-colonial era meant that by the 1990s virtually all Samoan families had close kin living in New Zealand, Australia and/or the United States or even further afield.

[5] In 2023 this was increased to 1,650 (Government of Samoa 1 August 2023).

With the introduction of labour mobility schemes in the early years of the twenty-first century, Samoa's migration patterns changed, with more people working abroad on temporary contracts rather than permanently migrating. The first labour mobility initiative was the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, which began in 2007, recruiting Samoans and other Pacific Islanders to the horticulture and viticulture industries in New Zealand for seasonal work. In the period from 2007 to 2023, Samoa sent 22,681 RSE workers to New Zealand (Bedford and Bedford 2023:40).

Launched in 2012, Australia's Seasonal Work Programme (SWP), like the New Zealand RSE, allowed temporary employment of Pacific Islanders, mainly in the horticultural sector. The Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), initiated in 2018, offered longer work visas for work in sectors such as meatpacking, aged care and hospitality. The two Australian schemes were merged under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme in 2022. As of April 2023 there were 4,673 Samoan workers in Australia under the PALM scheme (DFAT nd).

The ninth and tenth articles in this collection present the findings of research by teams from the Centre for Samoan Studies of the National University of Samoa, which interviewed Samoans about their motivations for going abroad under the labour mobility schemes and their experiences while abroad.

While outward labour migration of Samoans has brought benefits to Samoa, it has also created issues, particularly for the local labour market, as discussed by Penelope Schoeffel, Masami Tsujita and Michael Yemoh in the article titled 'Impacts of Labour Mobility Schemes on Samoa's Labour Market'. Labour mobility has also contributed to a number of social issues, including family breakups, and has impacted Samoa's culture and way of life in various ways. These issues and impacts are touched upon in the various articles and are explored further in the article titled 'Labour Mobility: A Blessing and a Curse', which also discusses government policy measures that aim to tackle some of the issues.

Samoa currently has a population of approximately 230,000, a diaspora of more than 300,000 and an economy that is highly dependent on labour mobility, remittances and foreign aid.

We aren't labour, we're people

Pacific labour mobility is taking place against of backdrop of increased international interest in the region. The dominance of Australia, New Zealand and the United States has been challenged by China's expanding role in Pacific infrastructure and finance. In response, Western countries are increasing diplomatic presence, aid and security, among other initiatives (Sora, Collins and Keen 2024). This geopolitical competition means that Pacific countries have greater scope to negotiate the terms of aid and trade. Pacific labour schemes are one area where Pacific governments have questioned the 'rules' of engagement. Pacific leaders are leveraging their new geopolitical influence by questioning the impacts of these schemes on national economies, cultural values and societies. One of our study participants astutely critiqued the potentially dehumanising aspects of labour schemes by emphasising: "we aren't labour, we're people". *Labour Mobility in Samoa: Past and Present* tells the story of people – their interests, motivations and aspirations – with the aim of amplifying voices and supporting the social and political agency of all Pacific peoples.

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Labour Mobility and Samoa's Colonial Past

Stewart Firth[6]

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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[6] This is an abridged version of my 1977article 'Governors Versus Settlers: The Dispute over Chinese Labour in German Samoa', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 11(2):155–179. I thank them for their generosity in permitting my 1977 article to be republished in an amended form.

[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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Samoa's First Labour Trade 1884-1914

Malama Meleisea[15]

In the years between 1880 and 1914, Samoa was a major importer of labour, bringing in thousands of labourers from other Pacific islands. During this period, foreigners, notably managers of German trading and planter companies, established plantations in Samoa on land they had acquired from Samoan chiefs during the civil wars that racked Samoa between 1870 and 1900, when Samoan leaders sold land for guns and other supplies.[16]

Thousands of young men and some young women from Melanesia, including from the various islands of the Bismarck Archipelago of German New Guinea and the pre-colonial Solomon Islands, eagerly signed contracts for three or more years of work in Samoa's plantations. These workers, like those who participate in today's Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme and Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme, hoped for better lives. They had heard they would be given coveted foods such as meat and rice every day, and many had seen with their own eyes other workers who came home with boxes of goods, such as clothing, steel axes, knives, muskets and many other valuable rarities that were treasured in those days, and they saw that such workers became important people in their communities when they returned home. Like the young Samoans who today go abroad as seasonal and longer-term workers, the Melanesian workers could renew their contracts, but they could not remain abroad permanently and most returned home.

German Samoa

In 1900, Germany annexed the western islands of the Samoan archipelago, which mainly comprised the two main islands of Upolu and Savai'i, where German plantations were concentrated. The assets of the biggest German trans-Pacific plantation company, J C Godeffroy & Sohn, had by that time been acquired by the Hamburg-based Deutsche Handels and Plantagen Gesellschaft

[15] Part of this article is abridged from my 1980 book *O Tama Uli: Melanesians in Samoa*. The research was conducted for my University of Papua New Guinea –Australian National University Honours Thesis (see also Meleisea 1976). I thank Penelope Schoeffel for editing this material for the current article.

[16] At that time, the Samoan leaders did not understand that the sale of land permanently alienated ownership, thinking that they were selling only the use-right of it.

(DHPG). The main plantation crop was coconuts, but cocoa and other crops were also grown. Godeffroys had developed a method of drying coconut meat – copra – so it became light and was easy to pack into sacks for shipping. In the pre-petroleum era, coconut oil was extracted from the copra in Germany and used to make soap and many other products. After the oil was extracted, the residue was used for winter animal feed. The coconut husks were used to manufacture mattresses and floor matting.

The DHPG and its predecessor had long been the dominant economic interest in Samoa, with large land holdings, and in 1900 the German administration awarded the company a monopoly on importing and employing Melanesian labour. This was facilitated when Germany annexed north-eastern New Guinea and the western Solomon Islands, where there were also large German plantations and large populations of potential labourers. German plantation companies had well-regulated systems to recruit and transport plantation workers to labour on their large plantations in German New Guinea, Fiji, parts of Micronesia and Samoa.

The extent of the DHPG's holdings and their prosperity has been almost forgotten today. During German rule in Samoa, the DHPG operated three main plantations on the north coast of Upolu at Vaitele, Vailele and Mulifanua, and it had smaller holdings at Vaivase and on the island of Savai'i. Its headquarters at Sogi in Apia was also the head office for its Pacific-wide plantation operations. Thus, Samoa was once the centre of Germany's Pacific coconut empire.

Each plantation had a German manager, as well as overseers, and the Mulifanua plantation also employed a number of European artisans, including carpenters and wheelwrights. In 1905, the Vailele estate employed 130 Melanesians under the direction of four German overseers. The estate covered 2,312 acres of which 1,700 acres were planted with coconuts, 30 with coffee, 27 with rubber, 8 with cocoa and the remainder used mainly for grazing. The estate had 650 head of cattle, as well as horses and donkeys (to carry coconuts), a piggery, a poultry unit and a flock of sheep that were being raised in the hope of obtaining wool as well as meat. The Vaitele estate comprised 3,000 acres, of which in 1906, 1,800 acres were planted with coconuts and 300 acres with cocoa. The estate employed 130 Melanesians and 30 Chinese, and had 500 head of cattle, 42 donkeys and 40 horses. In 1906, the Mulifanua estate covered 3,600 acres. The labour force comprised 300 Melanesians and 16 Chinese, and the plantation had numerous horses

and donkeys along with 2,600 head of cattle that grazed under the coconut palms. In 1910, the Mulifanua estate encompassed over 5,000 acres, divided into management units ranging from 50 to 800 acres each (Meleisea 1980).

Robert Louis Stevenson[17] writing in 1892 described Samoa's plantations as follows:

> *Even from the deck of an approaching ship, the island is seen to bear its signature-zones of cultivation showing in a more vivid tint of green on the dark vest of forest. The total area in use is near ten thousand acres. Hedges of fragrant lime enclose; broad avenues intersect them. You shall walk for hours in parks of palm-tree alleys, regular, like soldiers on parade; in the recesses of the hills, you may stumble on a millhouse, toiling and trembling there, fathoms deep in superincumbent forest. On the carpet of clean sward, troops of horses and herds of handsome cattle may be seen to browse; and to one accustomed to the rough luxuriance of the tropics, the appearance is of fairyland.*
>
> *The managers, many of them German sea-captains, are enthusiastic in their new employment. Experiment is continually afoot: coffee and cacao, both of excellent quality, are among the more recent outputs; and from one plantation quantities of pineapples are sent at a particular season to the Sydney markets. A hundred and fifty thousand pounds of English money, perhaps two hundred thousand, lie sunk in these magnificent estates. In estimating the expense of maintenance quite a fleet of ships must be remembered, and a strong staff of captains, supercargoes, overseers, and clerks. These last mess together at a liberal board; the wages are high, and the staff is inspired with a strong and pleasing sentiment of loyalty to their employers (1892:21)*

The prosperity of the German plantations declined after New Zealand annexed Samoa in 1914, at the onset of World War I. Initially, German plantation companies were allowed to continue their operations under the New Zealand military administration that governed Samoa between 1914 and 1920 because the New Zealanders lacked the capacity to operate the plantations, but this changed in 1920 when the League of Nations awarded New Zealand a mandate over Western Samoa. German plantations and assets were confiscated as reparation estates, and German planters and employees were deported. Some Melanesian workers remained in Samoa due to the misfortunes of war. Their labour contracts became invalid under the New Zealand administration, which only had the smallest idea of where the

[17] Robert Louis Stevenson arrived in Samoa in 1889 and lived there until his death. Stevenson became an advocate for Samoan land rights and political autonomy. He died on 3 December 1894 and was buried at Mount Vaea.

workers came from, and which wanted to keep them working on the plantations that New Zealand had confiscated from German owners.

In 1962, the plantations were transferred to the independent state of Western Samoa as “trust estates”. The decline of the plantations continued. Over the years, several plantations were subdivided and sold for residential and commercial use, and today large-scale primary production of tropical crops has ceased in Samoa.

Memories of plantation life

In 1975, only six of the Melanesian workers who had remained in Samoa were still alive. These were among the workers recruited between around 1905 and 1914 and never repatriated due to the New Zealand takeover in Samoa and the end of the trans-Pacific labour trade. Two of the six were very old and ill. The remaining four were still living fairly active lives in retirement with their families.

Between 1973 and 1975, I conducted a series of interviews with these four men, mainly concerning the circumstances of their recruitment and their lives as workers on the plantations. The testimonies of the four men cannot be considered to represent all of the roughly 100,000 Pacific Islanders (Corris 1973) who were recruited as labourers in the nineteenth century, or of the approximately 7,000 who were taken to Samoa between 1870 and 1914, but the overall similarity of these accounts to those documented prior to my research suggests that these testimonies present an accurate picture of life as a Melanesian plantation worker in Samoa recruited prior to 1914.

Tapusini Peni Maluana

Tapusini was born on Nissan Island (about 200 kilometres north-west of the Buka and Bougainville islands) in what is now Papua New Guinea. He signed on for two contracts in Samoa. After his first three-year contract, he returned to his home village for a few years and then signed a second contract. Tapusini thinks that he was about 13 or 14 years old when he first left home. His parents and relatives disapproved of him leaving, but Tapusini had heard stories about life in Samoa from men in his village who had been there on contract. They told him that life was good on the plantations, that delicious food (including fresh meat) was given in abundance to plantation workers and that fine clothes, such as those the Europeans wore, were made available to

them. Tapusini's parents could not change their son's mind about leaving, so they went down to the beach to watch him sail away along with about twenty other recruits from his island.

He remembers his contract being made out. The captain explained to the men that they would be away for three years, after which they would be taken home and each would be given a box of highly prized trade goods as payment. The captain wrote down the names of the recruits after they had made a verbal agreement to the terms of the contract.

On arriving in Samoa, the recruits were lined up for inspection and for division into working parties. As was usual for boys his age, Tapusini became a domestic servant and was sent to the house of the German manager of the Vailele plantation. His duties were gardening, looking after the horses and cart and driving the manager and his wife to town. Tapusini liked his job because he got to see more of town and village life and more of how Europeans in Samoa lived than most other plantation workers did. He recalled his experience as follows.

> *If the master wanted to go to town in the morning to do some business in the main office, I took him. Sometimes I had to wait around doing nothing while he drank beer. When he got drunk, I took him home, then his wife would tell me to get ready to take her to town that afternoon.*

Tapusini had quarters near his employer's residence, but he usually took his meals with the plantation labourers. Sometimes the ‘missus’ gave him food. For three years, Tapusini’s employment was easy and generally pleasant, he said, but he got lonely sometimes and asked to work on the plantation with the other men from his island. However, his boss told him he had to remain in his job as a servant.

When his contract expired, he was reluctant to leave Samoa, which is why, after returning to his home island, he signed on for a second contract. On his return, he was given the same job on the same plantation. When the New Zealand administration took over, his German boss was replaced by a New Zealander. Tapusini felt the new boss was better than the German one because he was much kinder to the ten boys who worked for him and seldom punished them

Tapusini said that the Germans punished the plantation workers by flogging them with horse whips if they were perceived as being lazy or disobedient. Another punishment Tapusini remembered was that of locking up workers in solitary confinement.

In 1918, the influenza pandemic reached Samoa, with terrible impacts. He recalled:

> *People who suffered did not seem really sick but complained of headaches and dizziness. They thought that they could cure themselves by putting their heads under a tap or in a stream. Some of them just died when they were going to the water and others died on the way back to their houses. I was not sick because my boss made me stay in the house away from the other workers.*

Tapusini was due for repatriation in 1918, and he was not clear about why he was not repatriated, but it seems that he was happy to remain in Samoa. He left his job as a servant sometime in the 1920s and joined the labourers collecting coconuts on the plantation. Although this work was more demanding and less varied, he was glad to be in the company of other Melanesians and to meet Samoans, who were by that time being employed alongside Melanesians. He remained working as a plantation labourer at Vailele until his retirement in the early 1960s.

He became a Christian after his second contract. During the German administration, Melanesian workers were not allowed to go to church because services were conducted in Samoan villages, and the Germans forbade Melanesians to associate with Samoans. After 1918 New Zealand relaxed the rules, however, so Tapusini and some of his fellow workers began to attend the Catholic Church in Vailele village. Later, he joined the London Missionary Society (LMS) church because one of its pastors was conducting evening literacy classes in the neighbouring village of Fagali'i. He subsequently became a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church because his oldest son became an active Seventh Day Adventist and converted the whole family.

Tapusini first met his wife at the literacy classes. He had got himself a guitar and soon became so interested in music that he dropped the evening classes and formed a string band. The band included Samoan and Melanesian plantation workers, with Tapusini as the leader. Soon the band became very popular, and Samoans would come to listen. Tapusini recalled that the village girls who were sent by their parents to the evening literacy classes would sneak off to listen to his band instead. Tapusini's wife was one of them. He said that after they had admired each other from a distance, the girl invited him to meet his parents, and he was given permission to court her. During his evening visits to her, the village girls asked him to play the guitar. His wife went to live with him some time in 1922. They had ten children, eight of

whom were still alive at the time of the interview. After he retired, he lived out the rest of his life in his wife's village.

Ti'a Likou

Likou came from the village of Matong on the south-western coast of East New Britain (now part of Papua New Guinea). By Likou's estimation, recruiting at Matong had been conducted on a regular basis for many years before he signed on in about 1910. This date is inferred partly from his memory of the Savai'i volcanic eruption in Samoa (which lasted from 1905 to 1911); he remembers seeing the smoke rising from the distant crater when his ship anchored in Apia harbour.

Likou estimated that he was about 14 years old when he signed on. His father was dead, and his mother did not want him to go, but he was determined to. He and several other boys from his village wanted the experience of going on a sea voyage, seeing new places and returning home as seasoned men of the world with a box of trade goods that would make them 'big men' in their clans. When the ship was sighted, Likou and his friends waited on the beach for the ship's dinghy to come ashore. In the dinghy were a few returning men from Matong who had completed their contracts in Samoa. Likou recalled that he and his friends assisted the recruiters by escorting some of the Melanesian crew members to inland villages to look for new recruits.

The ship sailed with about fifteen men and boys from Matong and neighbouring villages. It called at several other coastal villages and when it had recruited about a hundred men and boys, it went to Rabaul, the headquarters of German company operations in the area, where all the recruits were examined by a doctor before they set sail for Samoa. Likou enjoyed the voyage and said that the food they were given was good. He ate rice and drank tea with sugar for the first time and thought these were particularly delicious.

On arrival in Samoa, he was sent to the Vailele plantation. His job was to collect fallen coconuts and tend new plants. He recalled that quite a few Melanesian women were working on the plantation, cutting copra or operating the drier. All of them were wives of male labourers. Likou does not think that any women were recruited from his area. The labourers lived in big, open tin-roofed barracks, one for married couples and one for single men.

After two years, Likou was transferred to the Vaivase plantation, a newly developed enterprise where the main task was to clear thick bush for planting.

When war broke out in 1914, Likou was due for repatriation, but the workers were told that there were no ships to carry them, so he continued working at Vaivase. Likou recalled that after the war many Melanesians were repatriated and said that he had expected to be included in the next group when the ship returned, but he was told that the government in his own country had sent a telegram requesting to keep him and his fellow workers there.

When New Zealander managers took over the plantations, the Melanesian labourers began to receive cash wages – initially 3 shillings a day. Some years later, Likou was transferred to the Mulifanua plantation. He remembers that the Mau rebellion began shortly after his transfer, which places it at about 1926.

Likou said that life under German administration had good and bad points. The good side was the food and rations. In addition to fresh beef and vegetables grown on the plantation, each worker received plentiful supplies of tinned meat and fish, tea, sugar, rice and tobacco. They were supplied with *lavalavas* (sarongs) and belts to work in and with shirts and trousers to wear in their leisure time. Likou said that the workers had no knowledge of weekly, monthly or annual wages but understood that when their contracts were up they would go to the company store and fill up a large wooden chest with whatever goods (‘cargo’) they wanted. Since Likou was not sent home at the end of his contract, he was given his ‘cargo’ to use in Samoa.

The dark side of life under German rule was the harshness of the European overseers. These men rode horses and carried whips or sticks, which they used to flog or beat workers whom they considered to be lazy, slow or disobedient. Likou remarked that the overseers did not usually punish without reason. He said that some were kind and fair and did not beat the labourers unless several warnings had been disregarded; others were violent and did things like punch labourers in the face.

Likou said that the 1918 flu epidemic was a time of great fear. It broke out while he was at the Vaivase plantation. People died very suddenly and were immediately buried in mass graves at a place called Avuga behind the village of Fagali’i.

Likou said that few workers knew anything about European medical treatment, and there was no dispensary or doctor on any of the plantations

during the German administration. There was, however, a 'sick bay' (clinic) for the labourers near the DHPG's main office at Sogi in Apia. This was staffed by a German doctor and Samoan assistants. Likou recalled spending two days there while suffering from severe diarrhoea. On the plantations, the workers used various traditional Samoan and Melanesian remedies for minor ailments such as headaches and sores. The principal types of treatment were massages and herbal preparations.

Under the German administration, the lives of the Melanesian workers were very restricted. Association with Samoans was strictly forbidden, and since there were no churches on the plantations, the Melanesians could not attend services. Life consisted of working, eating, talking to one another and sleeping, Likou said. The highlights of the year in those days were the Christmas and New Year holidays when the labourers were given extra rations and got together to eat, dance and sing.

When New Zealand took over, conditions improved as Samoan workers were employed on the plantations, enabling the Melanesians to make friends outside the plantation. They were also allowed to attend village churches. Likou said this made life happier, so he and other Melanesian workers began to worry less about why they had not been repatriated.

Samoans seemed to have been attracted to the Melanesians for material reasons, he said. Melanesians had access to goods that were much desired by Samoans, such as biscuits, tea, sugar, tinned food and tobacco.

He thought that the Samoans in general were racially prejudiced towards the Melanesians, no doubt taking their cue from racist European attitudes to darker-skinned people. He recalled that when Melanesian labourers took strolls along the roads adjoining the plantations in the evenings, the Samoans would call out rudely to them.

> *The girls were the worst, they used to take out their handkerchiefs and cover their noses when we passed them, saying that we smelled. Sometimes they would call out when they saw us that it was going to rain because they could see black clouds approaching, meaning us black boys. Sometimes our boys would get so angry that they would hit Samoans who teased them, especially the young boys. This would make the Samoans angry, and some would complain to our boss on the plantation, but he would defend us.*

The racist attitude of Europeans in Samoa is illustrated by Robert Louis Stevenson (1892:22), who referred to the escape of some indentured Melanesian labourers from plantations in 1888:

A certain number of … wild negritos from the west, have taken to the bush, … the Samoans regard these dark-skinned rangers with extreme alarm; the fourth refugee in Tutuila was shot down … tales of cannibalism run round the country, and the natives shudder about the evening fire.

Like Tapusini, Likou began going to church in 1920 when the New Zealand administration permitted Melanesians to associate with Samoans. The first churches to be attended by Melanesians were the Catholic Church at Vailele and the London Missionary Society (now the Congregational Church of Samoa) church at Fagali'i, which he joined. When he was transferred to Mulifanua, he found that the nearest church was over two miles (three kilometres) away, so he started campaigning for a Samoan pastor to come to the plantation to conduct services each Sunday. He said he persuaded some other Melanesians to support his campaign by telling them that sickness and accidents on the plantation were due to the lack of Christian influence. The London Missionary Society (LMS) eventually agreed to send theological college students and ministers from nearby parishes who took turns to conduct services on the plantation. Eventually the resident plantation labourers, mostly Melanesians, raised money among themselves and built a pastor's house and later a church.

Likou did not go to school and never became literate. Although Likou could not read the Bible, he became a deacon in the Congregational Church in his later years because he was very good at leading prayers. Before he could be appointed as a deacon, however, Likou had to get married in church to the woman with whom he had lived for many years and who had borne him three children. The marriage took place in 1952, by which time all of his children were adults.

Likou's wife was from Tiavea village, which was a long way from the plantation. She had come to work on the plantation with a Samoan group to raise funds for their church when she was a young woman in the early 1920s. When interviewed in 1975, Likou and his wife had seven grandchildren, and all of their descendants were living with them on the plantation. Likou had never met his wife's family or been invited to her village, but his children and grandchildren visited the village occasionally.

In the mid-1950s, men from Sa'asa'ai on the island of Savai'i came to work on the same plantation as Likou for six months to earn money to build a church. They were housed by the permanent plantation workers, who treated them very hospitably. When their contract was up, the chiefs from Sa'asa'ai

rewarded the workers for their hospitality by giving them honorary titles. Likou received the honorary Samoan title of "Ti'a".

Mala Pasi Tevita

Mala came from the Nakanai area of West New Britain but could not remember the name of his village. It is likely that Mala arrived in Samoa sometime between 1905 and 1911. He spoke of seeing people from Sale'aula village (on the island of Savai'i) being resettled at Le'auva'a, a village on the island of Upolu, after their homes had been destroyed by the Savai'i volcanic eruption. Mala said that the Germans used plantation workers to distribute emergency food supplies to the refugees.

Mala said he joined the recruiting boat because he thought it would be an adventure. He had heard of other men who had been to Samoa and returned with boxes of valuable items, and he said that the area he was from had had little contact with the outside world so he was very curious to learn more about it. He thinks he was about 15 or 16 years old when he left. He did not ask his parents' or elders' permission but went to meet the recruiters with a friend and asked one of the shiphands to hide him and his friend on board while the recruiting negotiations were being held ashore. Mala said that he heard from later recruits from his village that his parents just shook their heads when they discovered his absence.

Mala enjoyed the trip to Samoa. He said they were served rice and tinned meat, which he liked very much, as well as familiar foods such as yams, bananas and sweet potatoes. The captain was Danish, and Mala said that he had a Samoan wife. He said that this captain was very friendly, and Mala joked: "We thought that at any moment he would take one of us on his lap and stroke him, the way we do to piglet". There were communication problems between the recruits themselves (who were from different islands and regions) and also between the Melanesians and the white officers of the ship. The recruits tended only to talk with those who spoke the same language as themselves.

Mala made his contract by telling the captain his name; the captain then wrote it in a book. An explanation of terms was not made, but Mala said he knew what to expect (from the returned recruits he had met). Each recruit was issued with a cup, plate, spoon and a *lavalava* (sarong) for the voyage.

The first stop was at Mioko, the DHPG's base in the Duke of York Islands, where medical inspections were carried out by German authorities and

supplies were taken on board for the voyage to Samoa. Mala said several recruits were left behind because they were declared unfit.

On arrival in Apia:

> *We were lined up on the wharf, and after the routine check we were divided into groups and sent off to work. My group went to Mulifanua, the biggest plantation and most distant from Apia. On our way, we saw many Samoan houses and villages, but once we arrived at the plantation we saw very little of Samoa.*

The Germans did their best to enforce racial segregation:

> *We were not allowed to befriend any Samoans, and they were forbidden to visit the plantations. Once we were here, we had to put up with it.*

The men were housed in long tin-roofed dormitories with concrete floors and timber walls, which were partitioned into small rooms shared by two or three people. Mala shared a room with one of his *wantoks* (someone who spoke the same language as himself), which helped a lot during the period of loneliness so common among new arrivals to the plantation.

Communication with others increased as the new recruits learned to speak pidgin.[18] This was the main language of communication on the plantations, and it was used by the Germans to give orders and to talk to the workers.

Mala found it difficult to adapt to the highly regimented life. Work started at 7 am and continued until 5 pm, with an hour's break at midday. A 'boss boy' oversaw each work gang; his job was to make sure that there was no loafing during working hours. A white overseer also checked their work every hour or so. Discipline was very harsh. To quote Mala:

> *Disobedient boys were flogged with a horse or cattle whip. If a boy was very difficult, the manager locked him up in one of the small houses on the plantation built especially for this purpose. The offender would be sent to work during the day, and after his evening meal he would be locked up by himself in one of these little houses all night without a light.*

Mala said that one man was brought to Mulifanua from another plantation to undergo this punishment: "The idea was to separate him from his friends, but this did not work because he started making friends the first day he joined one of our working groups". Mala accepted that from the German point of

[18] The creole lingua franca pidgin (*Tokpisin*) spoken in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands and the *Bislama* of Vanuatu are believed by linguist Pieter Mühlhäusler (1985) to have originated on the Samoan plantations where pidgin was used by workers and German overseers.

view it was necessary to punish disobedience and force labourers to work hard, but he thought the punishments were too severe.

Cooking was done by details of men who were given time off from plantation work for the task. The food was very good, Mala said, especially the abundant supply of fresh and tinned meat. At Mulifanua plantation, taro, yams and bananas were bought by the company from Samoan growers. Mala said nostalgically, "There was a lot of wasted food. Generally, the boys were not great eaters and when we sat down for an evening meal we drank a lot of tea but ate only a small amount of food. Leftovers were given to the pigs. [At the evening meal] we used to dress up like Europeans in trousers, shoes and socks".

Mala said that the New Zealand expeditionary forces (sent to capture Samoa from Germany when World War I broke out in 1914) arrived in Samoa at about the time his contract was due to terminate. Mala's repatriation was delayed by a ban on German shipping after the outbreak of war. When the war ended, most of the Melanesians were repatriated, and Mala said that he wanted to go, but he was told that he had to stay and look after the plantation until more workers were recruited. He received his 'cargo' from the Germans, then continued to work for three shillings a day plus rations under New Zealand management. He continued to hope for repatriation, but it was never mentioned again.

Life on the plantations became more relaxed and interesting under the relatively benign New Zealand administration, and opportunities for outside contacts opened up as Samoan workers began to be employed on the plantations. The New Zealanders allowed the workers more freedom of movement, enabling social visits between plantations. Each plantation took turns to host a big feast on public holidays. In preparation for these feasts, the plantation workers raised their own pigs, planted taro, yams and bananas and pooled their money to buy tinned meat and fish and bags of rice and sugar. On these occasions, each Melanesian ethnic group put on traditional dances from their home areas. Large groups of the labourers' Samoan friends and their families were invited on these occasions. Mala said, "This improved our relationship with Samoans because they always took home baskets of food".

In the 1920s, Mala married a Samoan who had four children from an earlier relationship with a Melanesian who had died of an illness. Mala adopted those children by registering them in his own name and had two children with his wife. At the time of my interview with Mala, his descendants consisted of six

children, forty-seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. When he retired, he and his family continued to live at Sogi in Apia, which had previously been the DHPG headquarters and where some of the other non-repatriated Melanesian workers had settled.

Tui Sakila

Tui was born on Mussau Island in the Saint Mathias group of the Bismarck Archipelago (now part of Papua New Guinea). Recruiting boats had been calling regularly at Mussau for some time, and Tui knew several men who had been to Samoa. When he was about 12 years old, the ship "Samoa" anchored near his village, and Tui and his older brother decided to sign on and see the world. They did not tell their parents that they were going, and Tui never found out what his parents' reaction was. Tui said he and the other recruits were quite willing to leave their island and understood that they would be expected to work for three years cutting bush and grass and collecting coconuts on a plantation in return for a large box of trade goods.

He was taken first to Mioko, and after the usual checks and provisioning he began the voyage to Samoa, which Tui said took about three weeks. Because of Tui's youth and small size, he was separated from his brother, who went with the plantation labourers while Tui was grouped with a number of other boys. Most boys were given jobs in hotels or in the households of German officials as domestic servants, but Tui was appointed messenger boy at the Mulifanua plantation. His job was to carry written messages and mail from one European to another at their various locations around the plantation. The novelty of this job soon wore off as it involved walking back and forth across 4,000 acres of plantation all day. In addition to carrying messages, he was also required to fetch drinking water and perform other chores for the overseers. Tui said it was very tiring. When he was assigned to regular plantation work after about a year, he found this work much easier.

Like the other Melanesian workers whose experiences are recorded in this article, Tui lived in a large dormitory and thought his standard of living was very good. He said he was very shy and did not socialise much during the German era. He recalled how strictly the rule against mixing with Samoans was enforced, but said that the rules were broken at times. Some of the workers had had missionary contact before being recruited and were Christians. They would get up early on Sunday mornings, wash and get dressed up and sneak off to church in a village adjoining the plantation. They

would come straight back after services, put on their old clothes and sit around as though nothing had happened. Tui never joined them as he was too scared. Such actions were taken very seriously by German authorities and Samoan village leaders and pastors in villages near the plantation had been warned to report such incidents to the authorities. Tui said that the villagers had friendly feelings to the church-going labourers, partly because the labourers generously gave them sticks of tobacco.

The transition from German to New Zealand rule created much confusion among the plantation labourers, particularly when New Zealanders took over the plantations. Their confusion mainly concerned repatriation and what rights the workers had in this regard. Tui gave the following account:

> *Unlike the Germans, who kept a list of those whose contracts had expired and were due for repatriation, the British [New Zealanders] were very disorganised. Those who were living closer to Apia were repatriated first, regardless of the order in which they had been recruited. Those who were working on plantations further out of town were told at first that they would be the next to be sent home, but this did not happen. We were told that we were to stay in Samoa to look after the plantations.*

Asked why he accepted the order to stay, Tui said "In those days we did not argue with white men". Tui's brother went home in 1918, and Tui sent his box of goods with his brother. He said he never heard whether his family received them. After his brother's ship had left, Tui was the only recruit from Mussau left in Samoa, with the exception of a woman married to a Melanesian labourer from another area. At the time of the interview, Tui said that she and her husband had died many years ago, but they had children still living in Samoa. Tui was very lonely after his brother and other *wantoks* had gone. Because of his shyness he had never learned to speak pidgin properly, but now he was forced to learn it to communicate with his fellow workers. When Samoans started working on the plantations, Tui also began to learn Samoan.

Tui recalled many interesting aspects of the relationship between Samoans and Melanesians; for example, Samoans believed that Melanesians were powerful sorcerers and taught one another magical spells. He said that the main kind of 'sorcery' used on the plantation was a kind of 'love magic', although Tui was sceptical about whether those who did the 'magic' really had secret knowledge. Tui said he had no personal knowledge of traditional magic or sorcery, and referred to the Samoan proverb "cowards live longer" to indicate that he was not interested in taking such risks. He said that the

Melanesians conducted practices such as traditional nose and ear piercing on the plantations.

The Melanesians traded with the Samoans, selling imported food such as tinned corned beef and salmon, rice, tea, sugar, cloth and clothes. These items were great luxuries in the 1920s, and it was difficult for Samoan parents to resist when plantation workers courted their daughters. He joked that the parents of a young lady would call out after a departing Melanesian suitor, "Come again tomorrow night and don't forget to bring some sugar!" Tui eventually married but had only adopted children, and he lived all his life on the Vailele plantation.

In retrospect

Melanesian labour was essential to the colonial economies of German Samoa and German New Guinea prior to 1914. In Samoa, this imported labour enabled the Germans to avoid exploiting the indigenous people, just as the British had avoided it in Fiji by importing Melanesian, Chinese and Indian plantation workers.

From 1882, Germany followed ordinances designed to safeguard the welfare of Melanesian labour on recruiting vessels and on plantations. Recruits were to be provided with daily rations, and each recruit was to have 40 cubic feet of living space below deck. In addition, an adequate supply of medicine was to be carried on recruiting vessels, and recruiters were required to have government licenses. The care, feeding, housing and length of service were similarly specified on the German plantations.

According to the four men whose experiences are described above, as long as they were treated in what they considered to be a reasonably kind way and survived their three years' indenture, they were satisfied with the terms of their contract. All four informants agreed that they were very well fed, both on the ship and on the plantations. All of them enjoyed the voyage, and while none understood the concept of "40 cubic feet" they thought their accommodation was comfortable on board.

In the matter of health care, the problem lay in the difficulties of communication rather than in the availability of medicine. The recruits had no conception of Western medicine, so treatment was only given when they were so ill that their illness was obvious to their European employers. Likou said that a fellow recruit died during his voyage to Samoa, but no one knew he was sick until he died.

These four men were prepared to work hard in prison-like conditions for three years in order to experience something of the world outside the limits of their small villages. Such a desire for adventure is understandable in young men from any culture and any period of history. To them, the work was not exploitation. The box of ‘cargo’ with which they were paid was a small fortune in the eyes of villagers who had little or no other means of access to manufactured goods.

When comparing the experiences of Melanesian and Chinese indentured labourers in Samoa (see the article by Ming Leung Wai in this volume), the underprivileged status of the Melanesians becomes very apparent. The Melanesians became aware of this in the late 1920s. The Chinese labourers came from a country with institutions recognised by the German and New Zealand administrations, and which provided consular representation from 1909, and there was official Chinese scrutiny of working and living conditions. The dwellings of Chinese workers were inspected by their representatives, who would not allot Chinese workers to plantations where accommodation was below standard (see the article by Stewart Firth in this volume). During the German administration, while Melanesian labourers received no wages, the Chinese labourers received 12 shillings per month, in addition to rations and quarters. In 1905, the Chinese residents were given their own ward in the Apia hospital. Some Chinese were recognised by Germans as having equivalent legal status to Samoans, and in 1912 their status was elevated, allowing them to be legally classified with Europeans as resident aliens. In contrast, Melanesians came from lands that were being disrupted and plundered by colonialism, with no recognised government to represent them other than the colonisers themselves. They received no cash wages, were restricted entirely to working for the DHPG and had no legal status. The only medical service for them was the ‘sick bay’ at the company headquarters in Apia. Melanesians were at the mercy of plantation overseers' whims as far as punishment was concerned and were forbidden to mix with Samoans. The seclusion of Melanesian workers on the plantations, in contrast to the increasing freedom of movement permitted to the Chinese workers over time, made it possible to enforce strict regulations upon them.

Although New Zealand made racist efforts to segregate Chinese from Samoans and cruelly deported many Chinese workers who wanted to say in Samoa with their wives and children (see the article by Ming Leung Wai in this volume), it is clear that the experiences of the Melanesians in Samoa was

worse. Their 'contracts' were a form of temporary slavery reinforced by the DHPG monopoly over their services and the German administration's attitude that the company be left to run its own affairs as the backbone of the colonial economy (see the article by Stewart Firth in this volume). This monopoly was also a result of the fact that both the DHPG and the German administration exercised control over the Solomon and New Guinea islands, which supplied the labour. The failure of the New Zealand administration to repatriate 125 Melanesians still in Samoa after 1921 was probably a breach of contract and an act of gross exploitation that has never been compensated.

Longing for adventure and status goods

It is worth considering, a century later, how similar the motives and conditions of Samoan seasonal workers in Australia and New Zealand are to those recounted by Tapusini, Likou, Mala and Tui. Like the Melanesian workers, young Samoans want to travel abroad to 'see the world' and to earn money to spend on consumer goods, which give them and their families high status in their villages, and these Samoans are prepared to work hard for long hours under stern restrictions to get such goods.

The following two articles in this volume describe the experiences of Chinese indentured labourers and workers in Samoa (see the article by Ming Leung Wai) and the motivations of more recent 'imported' workers in the country (see the article by Masami Tsujita).

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The Chinese in Samoa: Settlers, Labourers and Investors

Ming Leung Wai[19]

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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Voices of South-South Migrant Workers in Samoa

Masami Tsujita

Labour mobility has been an important livelihood strategy for Samoans for years, with many Samoans migrating abroad to work, either temporarily or permanently. Between 2015 and 2020, about 3,800 Samoans emigrated each year, on average, through various immigration pathways (United Nations 2020). Approximately 135,700 Samoa-born Samoans now live abroad, and they represent one of the largest Pacific diaspora groups in the world (Migration Data Portal 2020a).

Labour mobility schemes commenced in 2007, opening new avenues to work abroad, first in New Zealand and later in Australia. These schemes were directed at unskilled and semi-skilled Samoans, who would otherwise have limited paid employment opportunities at home, but the schemes have also attracted many skilled workers.

A key reason Samoans choose to go abroad is to access higher-paying jobs, which enable them to save money and remit to their families to pay for their families' living expenses, church duties and *fa'alavelave* (traditional ceremonies and events) back home. Working abroad has become especially attractive in recent years as the cost of living has increased in Samoa, which makes it difficult for families to make ends meet. Given that expectations of what constitutes 'a better life' have changed and that jobs with sufficient wages to meet such expectations are few and far between in Samoa, there is a common perception in Samoa that working abroad on temporary contracts or migrating permanently are the only viable means of achieving the desired standard of living.

While more Samoans look outside the country for employment, there is an increasing flow of people moving into Samoa, particularly from the Global South, to fill gaps in the local labour market. From the standpoint of these incoming migrant workers, Samoa is a country of socioeconomic opportunities that are not available in their home countries. Although inward labour migration is not new in Samoa (as discussed in the previous articles in this volume), it is a trend that appears to have strengthened in recent years.

Although South-South labour migration is a growing trend, it is an understudied area, especially in the Pacific Islands region where most migration studies focus on emigration to industrialised countries. This article

presents the voices of three migrant workers in Samoa, examining their reasons for coming to Samoa and their perspectives of Samoa's labour market.[20] This article also examines some controversial issues relating to labour migration into Samoa, including aggressive business practices by some migrants, the growing dependence on migrant domestic workers and the phenomenon of marriage for citizenship.

Migrant workers in Samoa: Who are they and where are they from?

According to the Migration Data Portal (2020a), about 4,000 foreign-born residents lived in Samoa as of 2020, representing almost 2 percent of the total population.[21] A lack of disaggregated migration data makes it impossible to identify how many of these residents are migrant workers.[22] Samoa's population census data indicate the number of foreign residents in the country but does not indicate their ethnicities or nationalities, and also does not distinguish migrant workers from other groups of foreign residents, including the non-citizen spouses of Samoan citizens and non-citizen employees of embassies and international organizations and their families[23] (Tsujita et al. 2021). Similarly, although Samoa's Labour Market Survey (MCIL 2019) indicates that 565 out of 18,296 employees in the private sector in 2019 were non-Samoan citizens, this figure does not clarify if these non-citizens were foreign-born ethnic Samoans or the spouses and family members of Samoan citizens who are not of Samoan descent, or were migrant workers or other foreign workers. Like many other countries in the Pacific region, Samoa

[20] These workers come from China, Fiji and West Africa. The number of Fijian and African migrant workers in Samoa is small relative to the number of Chinese, and their migration paths and experiences in Samoa appear to differ from those of the Chinese in various ways.

[21] Samoa has a total population of around 220,000 (WHO 2022).

[22] The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines a "migrant worker" (or "migrant for employment") as a person who migrates from one country to another with a view to being employed otherwise than on his or her own account (ILO, 1999). In this article, migrant workers are defined both by ethnicity and nationality, referring to people of non-Samoan descent who have moved to Samoa from their country of usual residence for the purpose of employment or business.

[23] These employees are not classified as migrant workers because they were hired abroad by a State or international organisation to perform official functions or to participate in development programmes, and their admission and status are regulated by international law or specific agreements (IOM nd). Moreover, they have the obligation to leave the country of work after completing their contracts, and they do not generally travel with the intention of remaining in the job or in the host country permanently.

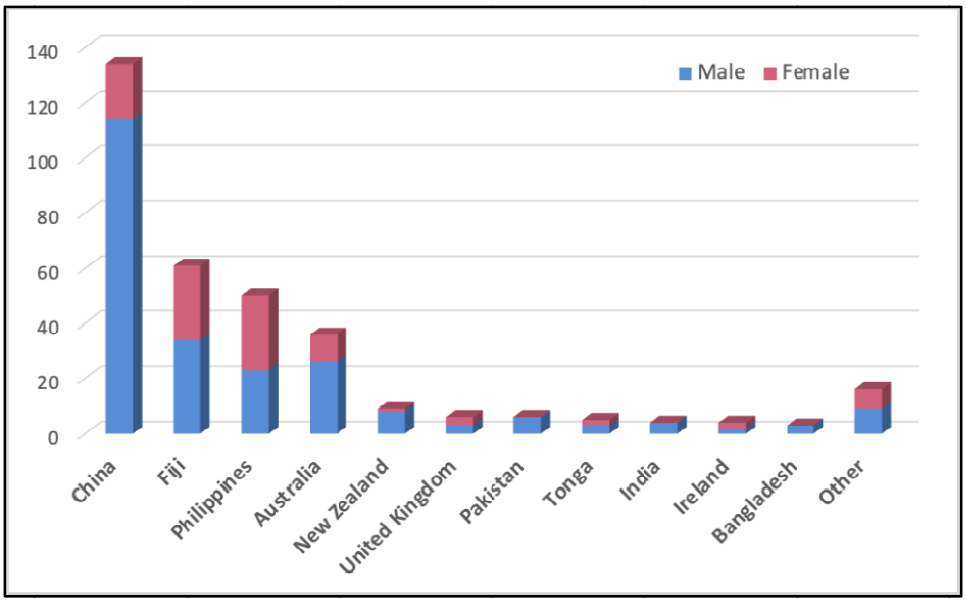
does not currently have the resources required to establish an efficient data collection system and to compile comprehensive migration records (Kagan and Campbell 2015).

To estimate the number of migrant workers in Samoa, one can look at the number of Foreign Employee Employment Permits (FEEPs) issued. Jointly administered by the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour (MCIL), FEEPs are issued to non-citizens who wish to take up employment or undertake business in Samoa (MCIL 2018). According to the FEEP policy, which came into force in 2018, these work permits are only granted to non-citizens who have skills, qualifications and experience that are lacking in the domestic labour market (MCIL 2020:33). While non-citizens are permitted to work, the ministry's priority is to provide employment and training opportunities for Samoan citizens (MCIL 2018:1).

Every year, the government issues between 300 and 500 FEEPs. Because each FEEP is valid for two years, it can be estimated that there are between 600 and 1,000 migrant workers in Samoa at any given time. However, whether or not FEEP holders remain in Samoa or depart when their permits expire is not recorded. This is because the repatriation of FEEP holders is not regulated by the Labour and Employment Relations Act 2013 (MCIL 2018).

While the number of FEEPs does not represent the exact number of migrant workers in the country, it does offer some basic demographic information on the countries of origin, sex and host industries of these permit-holders. In the fiscal year of 2021/22, the government issued 334 FEEPs (MCIL 2023); most of these FEEP holders were Chinese (134), followed by Fijians (61) and Filipinos (50). The countries of origin and sexes are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1. FEEP holders by country of origin and sex, FY2021/22

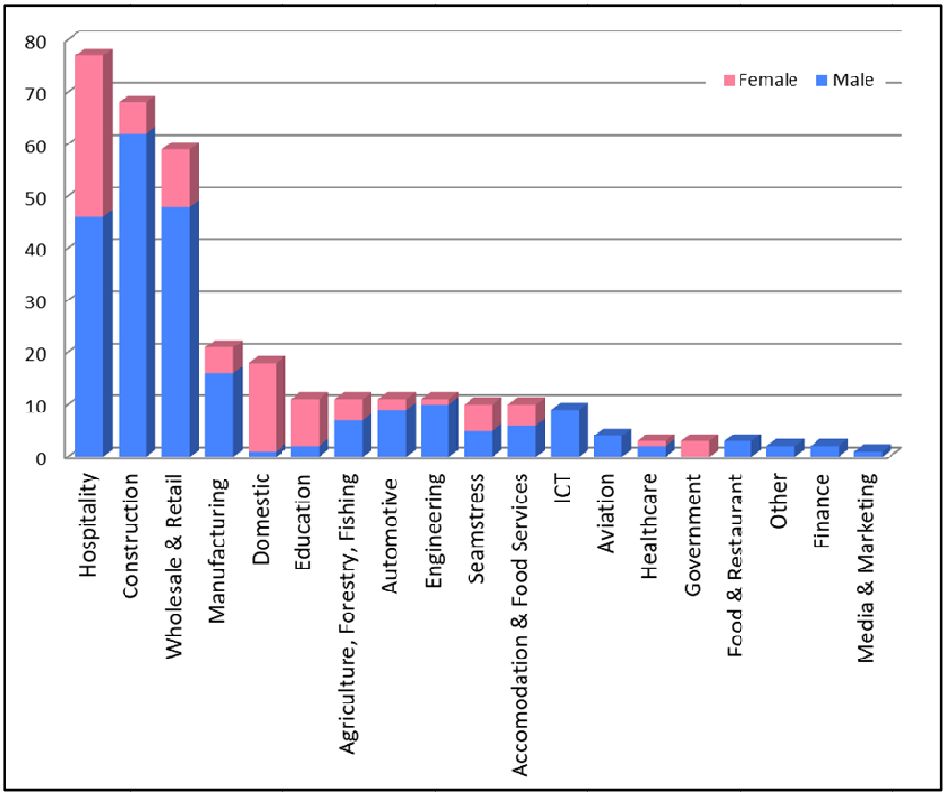


Source: MCIL 2023

Data from the past few years indicate that three countries of origin – People's Republic of China (China), Fiji and the Philippines – are consistently the key sources of labour migration to Samoa and to other Pacific Island countries (Tsujita 2018; MCIL 2020). In Papua New Guinea, for example, Filipinos are often the preferred choice of foreign workers (ILO 2019:26). They have earned a reputation among employers there for their competence, qualifications, hard work and relative affordability compared to similarly skilled workers from other countries. This is the perception of some Samoan employers as well.

Most FEEPs are granted to workers in the hospitality, construction and wholesale and retail industries (MCIL 2023) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. FEEP holders by industry and sex, FY2021/22



Source: MCIL, 2023

The MCIL annual reports indicate that the number of FEEP-holders engaged in domestic work has declined since 2018. Previously, domestic work ranked among the top three most sought-after industries in Samoa for foreign workers, alongside construction and hospitality (MCIL 2020). But despite the decline, demand for foreign workers in domestic roles, specifically for housekeeping, babysitting and caregiving, still remains high.

Considering Samoa's high unemployment rate, especially among unskilled youth, one may wonder why foreigners are employed for domestic work positions, which do not require specific skills or qualifications, and how these workers get FEEPs, given that these permits are presumably only given to non-citizens who have skills, qualifications and experience that are in short supply or cannot be obtained in the country (MCIL 2018:4). One response to this is

that migrant workers often have 'soft skills' (attitudes and attributes) that are lacking in the local labour market. Indeed, many employers feel that Samoan workers often lack a favourable work ethic and lack long-term commitment, and often have undesirable attitudes and negative traits, including dishonesty (exhibited by lying and theft) (MCIL 2019:12). Given that a good work ethic and positive attitudes and traits are considered competences and qualities that are challenging to find in the local market, FEEPs are therefore granted to candidates with such attributes (MCIL 2018:5).

This question of why foreigners are employed for domestic work when local workers are available might also be partly answered by the fact that, from a Samoan cultural perspective, working for another person's family in a domestic position rather than for your own family is considered somewhat shameful, so such work is avoided by many locals. In addition, the time needed to travel to work by public transport can be quite long and the cost of local public transport in Samoa is fairly high relative to the wages paid for such work. Domestic workers from abroad, who do not have the same cultural perspective and who generally live with their employers, so do not have the constraints of distance, time and transportation costs, are therefore more attracted to this type of work than Samoans.

First-generation Chinese in Samoa

The growing presence of China in the Pacific region, with an associated increase in development assistance from China, has been a topic of debate for some time. Academics and media alike have asked whether Beijing has a "hidden agenda" in providing aid to certain Pacific Island states, often linking it to military interests in the region and the diplomatic competition between China and Taiwan (Atkinson 2010; Firth 2019; Hayward-Jones 2013; Wong 23 April 2010; Yang 2011).

In Samoa, perceptions of China's aid vary. While some welcome this aid, others criticise it because it is "tied" to certain obligations, such as the necessity of importing contractors, materials and workers from China (Noa Siaosi 2022). Likewise, while some Samoans welcome Chinese workers, many others are critical of the rapid increase in the number of Chinese nationals migrating to Samoa because these migrants compete with local business owners, often employing what are seen to be aggressive practices, and they disregard Samoan culture and customs (Noa Siaosi 2020; RNZ 31 March 2011; Samoa Observer 3 August 2018; Tcherkézoff 2017; Leung Wai 2021). For

example, one of my local students in Samoa said she felt offended when she saw her fellow Samoan workers being scolded in public by Chinese shop managers, as this indicated a lack of respect for the worker.

According to a study by Noa Siaosi (2020), the increased flow of Chinese migration to the Pacific can be attributed to the Chinese government's policy of encouraging sojourners and investments abroad. The large number of Chinese migrant workers in Samoa makes this group particularly visible. My direct observation suggests four somewhat overlapping categories among the Chinese people who have arrived in Samoa for employment over the past few decades. The first category is made up primarily of diplomats who work for the Embassy of People's Republic of China in Samoa and Chinese aid-related workers including experts, advisors, medical doctors and volunteers. They are dispatched to Samoa on missions of two to three years.[24]

The second category consists of Chinese contract workers who come to Samoa mainly for infrastructure projects funded by China's aid. These workers, mostly men,work in Samoa for the duration of the specific projects for which they are employed. Between 2012 and 2016, 723 Chinese nationals came to Samoa under this category (Noa Siaosi 2020:45). They are usually granted a FEEP or a special permit for a "purpose approved by the minister".[25]

The third category includes Chinese migrants who have migrated to Samoa because of family ties and came to work for family-run businesses and restaurants in Samoa. Many have become naturalized Samoan citizens. Frankie Cai, the owner of Frankie Company Limited, can be considered an example of this category. He moved to Samoa to assist an uncle with his business, and eventually founded his own wholesale and retail trade businesses. Today those businesses are among the largest private-sector employers in Samoa, with about 2,500 employees in total.

The fourth category is made up of entrepreneurial migrants and their associates, including spouses and dependents, who move to Samoa and either work for Chinese-owned businesses or establish their own businesses, particularly in the wholesale and construction industries. These are first-generation migrants with no familial ties to Samoa, and they make up the majority of Chinese migrants arriving in Samoa today (see the article in this volume by Ming Leung Wai).

[24] Such employees are not categorized as migrant workers (see footnote 4).

[25] Like those in the first category, these employees are also not considered to be migrant workers.

Fijians in Samoa

Fijians are mainly employed in the domestic work sector in Samoa. In the fiscal year 2021/22 (MCIL 2023), fourteen out of the eighteen FEEP-holders working in domestic services were Fijian women, with the remainder being one Chinese woman, one Fijian man and two Filipina women. While the ethnicity is not explicitly indicated in the FEEP data, from my observations it appears that the Fijian citizens employed are all indigenous Fijians, not Indo-Fijians. Workers in this category commonly function as live-in domestic service providers, often referred to as 'housegirls'.[26]

Migrant domestic workers across the world often face overwork and abuse, and they sometimes suffer psychologically, and even physically, in a foreign land. This has also sometimes been the case in Samoa. The issue of foreign domestic workers gained widespread attention in Samoa in 2018 when two housegirls from Fiji without proper work permits escaped from their workplace, and said they had been mistreated by their employer (RNZ 28 March 2018). Their Samoan employer made a counterclaim, alleging that these women were stealing items from the employer's house. After a government investigation, the women were permitted to return to Fiji (Feagaimaali'i-Luamanu 5 May 2018). This incident led to increased scrutiny of foreign housegirls and of the reasons why employers prefer foreign workers over locals (Feagaimaali'i-Luamanu 7 May 2018; Lesa 7 May 2018; Samoa Observer 10 May 2018).

On the sending side, in Fiji, temporary labour migration became popular among Fijians in early 1990s, with skilled workers from various sectors moving abroad for work, including in the peacekeeping forces, and as security personnel, doctors, nurses, teachers, pilots, lawyers, mechanics, electricians and athletes (Mohanty 2006:113; Rokoduru 2006). While some skilled Fijians have taken up employment in Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East, others have migrated to other Pacific Island states. Rokoduru (2006:184) examined the movement of nurses from Fiji to the Marshall Islands and Kiribati and found that the main push factor was inadequate salaries in Fiji. She identified this flow of migration as temporary, undertaken primarily to

[26] The term 'housegirl' is considered by some to be derogatory as it implies a specific gender role and reflects the colonial legacy of master-servant relationships, but the term is commonly used in Samoa as an English translation of the Samoan term '*teine teufale*', which refers to female domestic helpers tasked with responsibilities such as housekeeping, babysitting, care giving and other household duties.

seek better economic opportunities elsewhere. Semi-skilled and unskilled migrant workers from Fiji can be found across the Pacific, including in the Cook Islands and Marshall Islands, particularly in domestic work and in the hospitality industry. These migrant workers primarily aim to generate remittances to send home (Mohanty 2006:114).

Marriage for citizenship and other scams in Samoa

A foreigner, or non-citizen, can acquire Samoan citizenship through various pathways, including by marrying a Samoan citizen and via investment. The Citizenship Investment Programme, instituted in 2017, aims to promote foreign direct investment, allowing the investor the right to citizenship through investment of the minimum amount of WST4 million in Samoa (MCIL nd). According to a MCIL officer, however, this strategy has only attracted a small number of foreign investors (personal communication with a senior MCIL officer 3 May 2023).

'Marriage for citizenship' refers to the process in which a non-citizen marries a citizen solely with the aim of acquiring legal residency and eligibility to apply for citizenship. This kind of scam marriage is a pervasive form of fraud worldwide, and is a prominent theme in movies, reflecting its prevalence and societal implications. In Samoa, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of marriages between non-Samoans and Samoans in recent decades, particularly between recent Chinese male migrants and Samoan women.

Some Samoans believe that such migrants are marrying local girls for citizenship, with the ultimate goal of gaining access to Samoan land. In Samoa, around 80 percent of land is held under customary tenure, owned by extended families. Customary land is protected under the Constitution for use by the people of Samoa, and it cannot be sold. Of the remaining 20 percent of land, 16 percent is public land managed by the government while 4 percent is freehold land, which can be sold but only to Samoan citizens. Non-citizens can only purchase land in Samoa if they become a citizen, or if they buy it through their spouse or a child of theirs who holds Samoan citizenship.

Unions between migrant workers and Samoans may not necessarily be scams, however, or at least might not be a negative thing for Samoa overall. The first Samoan girl from my church who married a Chinese man, for example, now runs the business her husband started, indicating that she has benefited from the union. The second Samoan girl to marry a Chinese man

moved to China with her husband and, as of 2023, was expecting her second child there, indicating a seemingly positive outcome.

Treatment of migrants

Migrant workers globally often face stigmatization and discrimination. This is also the case in Samoa. Generally speaking, foreigners living in Samoa often experience different treatment from Samoans, regardless of their length of residency, especially if they are visibly not ethnically Samoan.[27] As an illustration, I am one of the six non-Samoans among nearly 400 staff members employed at NUS. We, the non-Samoan staff, are usually treated differently from Samoan staff. For instance, one of my non-Samoan colleagues at NUS despairs at the feeling of being excluded and isolated in the workplace, despite her achievements. While most treatment is not inherently racist, the treatment by some individuals, particularly those who have returned from overseas, can be discriminatory – sometimes reflecting an attitude of "What are you doing in my country?". Given such attitudes, Samoa may not be a place where labour migrants can live comfortably and feel fully accepted into society.

Some of the antagonism towards foreigners in Samoa may be related to the activities of some migrant workers. MCIL has reported several issues associated with migrant workers, including cases of workers with illegal working status and cases of non-compliance with regulations by their employers. For example, some migrant workers were found living in retail stores. They said they were in Samoa to "help out" rather than work (MCIL 2020:34).

The study of migration is both sensitive and challenging because some migrants, fearing identification and deportation, are reluctant to participate in research. This challenge is particularly pronounced in small, tightly connected homogeneous societies like Samoa, where non-ethnically-Samoan workers are easily identifiable.

A study by Tsujita et al. (2021) examined how the absence of anonymity and the fear of identification affected the willingness of migrant workers to participate in research, particularly studies of labour migration to Samoa. Along with the lack of funding to compile comprehensive data, this fear could

[27] In Samoa, 98 percent of the population consists of ethnic Samoans, which makes it quite easy to identify foreigners.

be another reason why Samoa and other small island nations in the Pacific have limited useful data on labour migrants. This lack of information often leaves migrant workers voiceless and unknown.

Migrant voices

To learn more about migrant workers in Samoa, I interviewed three people who were willing to share their stories. Two were introduced to me through my community network. I met them prior to the interviews to explain the purpose of the study in detail, establish rapport and confirm their willingness to participate. The interviews with these two were conducted in a meeting space at my office building on a Saturday morning when no other staff members were present. The third participant was a personal acquaintance whom I had known for several years. This interview was conducted at the participant's home. Their stories are presented below.[28]

Sam: Someone who never gives up

Sam was raised in a small village close to Beijing. He excelled academically, consistently ranking first in mathematics at school, and he was one of only two students from his village to be accepted into a university. At university, he pursued a Bachelor of Arts with a triple major in English, marketing and psychology. He intended to seek work for a company engaged in international trade. After graduating, although he passed the examination that would enable him to pursue higher education, he followed the Chinese tradition of finding employment so as to earn sufficient income to support his parents. Sam could have pursued a teaching position in China, but at the time he held the common perception that teaching was "women's work".

He first worked as a trainee with a few companies in his province and then relocated to Guangdong Province, where many companies are engaged in international trade, and where he could use his English skills. Sam secured a job as a salesperson with one of these companies and worked there for some time before deciding to return home to care for his mother, who had been injured in an accident. Several months later, he moved to another coastal province and joined one of the leading plastic-manufacturing companies in the country. He eventually became the manager of the overseas marketing

[28] Their names have been changed and some place names were omitted to protect their privacy.

team at this company, but he resigned when the working conditions changed, opting to join a locksmith company. At this company, Sam took the role of the manager of the overseas marketing team, travelling abroad and attracting overseas customers to China.

His life took a new turn when he married. His wife was a teacher at a school located on the other side of the province, so he relocated to be with her. There, Sam embarked on his own e-commerce venture with an investment of RMB50,000 (about USD7,000). Setting up his company was relatively straightforward, as he already had experience and had an established network of overseas customers in Australia, Europe, New Zealand and the USA. The business thrived for six years.

Sam first visited Samoa with his wife as a tourist in the mid-2010s, seeking a break from their busy life in China. They chose Samoa as their vacation destination because Sam had a regular customer in Samoa who had suggested several times that Sam consider starting a venture there. Although Sam was unfamiliar with Samoa and was unsure about whether he wanted to start a business there, he accepted the invitation to visit. They planned to stay for three months, but he decided to stay longer because his wife fell in love with the country. This prompted Sam to seek work.

At first he attempted an online trading business like the one he had operated in China, but he soon realized that the internet speed in Samoa was insufficient for effective communication with overseas customers. Subsequently, he and his wife applied for teaching positions. They were advised that starting their own tutoring school might be more viable, as teacher's salaries were insufficient and unlikely to cover their living expenses.[29] The local friend who had invited them to Samoa offered them a suitable location for a tutoring school, so Sam opened a business. He registered it under the MCIL and applied for a FEEP. Both Sam and his wife started teaching the Chinese language to school students. Later, Sam also began teaching mathematics, which expanded their student base. Word-of-mouth recommendations, especially from parents whose children improved in mathematics thanks to Sam, helped to grow their tutoring business. However,

[29] For many teachers, salaries are insufficient to cover living expenses, so Samoan teachers only manage to make ends meet through pooling their incomes with their families. Most families in Samoa rely on a range of income sources, including remittances and subsistence agriculture to meet their needs (see the article titled 'The Socioeconomic Context of the New Samoan Exodus: 2007–2023', Journal of Samoan Studies, forthcoming).

the fees they charged were only WST20 per hour and the number of students was insufficient to make ends meet. During their first year in Samoa, Sam also worked as a Chinese-English translator for the local Chinese community, but he had to rely on his savings to supplement their income. His parents in China also provided financial support for his tutoring business. After a year, the business had grown so Sam relocated it to a larger facility in town, but he continued to work as translator to keep the business afloat.

Three years later, in 2019, Sam had to return to China for a family matter and faced a turning point. He had to decide whether to move back to China or return to Samoa after his trip. Sam felt that China offered more business opportunities, but knew that the competition there was fierce. In Samoa, on the other hand, the market was much smaller, and things moved a slower pace, with less competition.

Sam recalled a moment of uncertainty:

> *At that time, I had been running my school business in Samoa for a few years, and China had changed significantly since I left. I wasn't sure if I could still succeed in the e-commerce business, or if it was a good idea. China is a vast country and every year many students graduate from universities, with companies preferring to hire young people. I thought if I returned [to China], I'd have no option but to start my own business. I wasn't sure if my skills were still up to date because China is changing so fast. Also, I'd already established my teaching business here [in Samoa] and was progressing. After teaching here for a few years, I didn't want to waste the time and effort I'd invested. I believed that if I gave up this business here and moved back, I'd always regret it. So, I made the decision to give my best effort to the teaching business.*

When Sam returned to Samoa, he doubled down on his business activities. First, he invested in himself to get teaching qualifications. He enrolled in an online teacher training programme and obtained a Chinese international teacher certificate, and did an online course in teaching mathematics offered by an institution in the United Kingdom, gaining a certificate. Next, he started a new business to supplement the income earned from his tutoring business. During a visit to China, he trained in locksmithing with his former employer, which enabled him to establish a locksmith business in Samoa. He had recognised a gap in the market in Samoa for locksmiths when he had lost a remote car key, which cost him WST1,500 to replace. This new business, along with his translation service, provided him with sufficient income to continue his tutoring business.

Seven years after opening his tutoring business, the business had an accumulated total of more than 100 students and it had finally begun to turn a profit, although it still had a long way to go before it could be considered truly successful. In 2023, he began the process of relocating the tutoring business to a larger facility with more spacious classrooms and additional seating for students. He aims to offer more subjects and hire additional teachers, and he wants to eventually establish a private school accredited by the Samoa Qualifications Association.

Sam said that migrating to Samoa changed the way he perceived the teaching profession. In China, he had considered it to be a profession more suitable for women than for men. However, in Samoa, teaching became the reason why he chose to stay. While he does not have a specific plan for the future, he remains committed to living in Samoa for the long term, primarily because he sees his work in education is an unfinished project:

> *To me, teaching is like a project. It's a big project. A school business is different from other kinds of businesses, like shops or restaurants. These businesses can earn more money every day if you work hard, but education is different. If you're running a school business and always seeking profits, that means you're not good educator. You must put your energy and effort first into teaching. Right? That's why school businesses don't make a lot of money. But I believe it's supposed to be like that. The quality of teaching must be the focus, not profit. The income from school is only enough to support my living here, so I do side businesses like locksmith and translation to further invest in my school. I can't recall how much money I've already invested [laugh]. That's why I have to finish this [laugh]. I need to work on this first before moving onto the next.*

Sam's tutoring business is not yielding significant profits, so persisting with it may not make economic sense, but he has a robust entrepreneurial drive that fuels his determination to persist and not relocate until he is satisfied with his achievement. Sam's enjoyment of teaching – a profession he initially did not want to pursue – also motivates him to continue.

Sam perceives Samoa as not necessarily being a friendly place for foreign business investment, given the unsatisfactory level of basic infrastructure required for smooth businesses operations, including internet speed and road conditions,and unfriendly social aspects for foreigners. He attributes the inadequate business infrastructure and the slow progress in Samoa to the 'brain drain' caused by emigration of the working-age population. If he were looking for a new place to begin a business venture, he probably would not choose Samoa. However, because of the slow pace of development, Samoa's

level of business competition is less intense than elsewhere, providing opportunities for business investors like Sam. Also, Sam found two untapped market niches, tutoring and locksmithing, which he was able to turn to his advantage with his entrepreneurial spirit.

New Chinese migrants to the Pacific are often suspected of harbouring hidden agendas, but if there is any hidden agenda behind the action of Sam, it is his entrepreneur spirit.This propels him forward.

Vā: An indispensible member of the household

Vā is an indigenous Fijian woman from a village near Suva. At home in Fiji, Vā was the primary caretaker of her family: her father and four younger siblings. Her mother did not live with the family because of work commitments. After graduating from high school, Vā enrolled in a university preparatory year at the University of the South Pacific, but had to withdraw to care for a bedridden aunt, who lived alone. Vā devoted five years to her aunt's well-being until her aunt's passing. Subsequently, Vā took part in a six-month caregiving training programme. Armed with a certificate from this programme, she found work as an on-call part-time caregiver at a hospital in times of staff shortages, tending to patients overnight and assisting them with baths. Seeing the success of classmates from her certificate programme who were working in Australia as caregivers, she considered taking another caregiving course to meet Australian standards, but by this time she had become a mother and was also still caring for her father and siblings, which left her with little time for her own pursuits. It was during this phase that she was approached with an offer of a caregiver job in Apia.

The job offer came from "Uncle Jimmy", a close friend of Vā's family. Originally from Samoa, but living in Fiji, he had been asked by a cousin in Samoa to find a diligent Fijian girl to assist his wife with household chores and be a caregiver for him and his wife who were both elderly. The offer was a two-year contract with an attractive salary package. Uncle Jimmy asked Vā to take the job because he was aware of her qualifications and positive attributes.

The elderly couple who asked Uncle Jimmy to help them find a 'housegirl'[30] from Fiji had nine children, all of whom were married and employed. One

[30] The term 'housegirl' is commonly used in Samoa as an English translation of the Samoan term '*teine teufale*', which refers to female domestic helpers.

child resided with them, five lived in Apia and three lived overseas. The couple had once had a live-in Samoan housegirl, but she resigned. One of their children, who employs a Fijian housegirl, suggested that they find a replacement from Fiji.

Initially Vā declined the request. She had heard distressing stories about the mistreatment of Fijian housegirls in Tonga, and one of her aunts had had a bad experience working as a housegirl for a couple from New Zealand in Samoa during the 1970s. Her aunt had been poorly treated but could not leave due to incomplete immigration papers and lack of support as a foreigner in Samoa. Her aunt warned her about the challenges of being alone in a foreign country without family or friends for support, especially for such a long period, and advised Vā to carefully consider.

However, Vā's father encouraged her to take the job. Vā recalled the conversation with her father:

> *Obviously, Uncle Jimmy went to see my dad, so my dad asked me why I said no to Jimmy and why I can't give it a try. "You can't keep living like this and waiting for a miracle to come to you", yeah, that's what he told me. So the push was him. He said, "Go and try. If we hear you're badly treated, we'll pay your airfare to come home". You know, we have to obey what father says, right?*

When asked why she thought her father had pushed her, she responded:

> *Ties of friendship. But dad also wanted me to live fully. He wanted me to live away from the family, because if not, I'd keep spinning around, looking after the family. So he was saying, "Don't waste your time looking after us". You get me? That's a kind of love he has. Mum told me later that dad was really missing me, and I should understand the sacrifice he was making for me.*

Upon arriving at the old Faleolo airport, Vā was taken aback at its small size, which was reminiscent of rural airports in Fiji. Vā arrived late at night and one of her employers' children picked her up from the airport and took her to their house to stay overnight. At their place, Vā was introduced to their Fijian housegirl, Sera. In their shared room that night, Sera asked why Vā had chosen to work in Samoa rather than in Australia or New Zealand. Sera told Vā that coming to Samoa was a waste of time because the wages were low given the amount of work. Sera attempted to convince Vā that she had made the wrong decision, saying that she had nearly reached the end of her two-year contract and she would not renew it. But Vā said that she would give it some time, since she had come to Samoa as a favour for a family friend who was related to her employers.

Vā moved to her employers' residence the next day and met the elderly couple. The couple were approachable, and the household chores assigned to her were manageable, but during the first evening meal Vā began to doubt her decision to come to Samoa. This was because of the Samoan custom in which people eat in the order of their social status and rank. The custom is such that the head of the family, other chiefly title holders, elders and guests, if any, eat first. Next, the heirs of the family and their children eat. In-laws and untitled relatives in the household (including housegirls, if any) prepare the meals, serve the food and eat last. Following this practice, Vā did not eat until everyone else was finished, and she ate alone. She was asked to fan the food of the elders to keep flies away while they were eating. Not invited to eat with the family was a culture shock that hit her hard emotionally.

> *Seeing [the couple] eating on the first day, second day and third day from the side of the table made me homesick because I really missed my family. I cried. The lifestyle here is different. We have . . . our own way of doing things [in Fiji]. Here, they eat first, and I eat later. In Fiji, I'm them, I eat first. Back home . . . we are also a chiefly family, [and] when we have occasions or functions, we hire people to serve us. In Fiji . . . we eat together. Eating together is the lifestyle we live in now. But over here is different; a different standard. This was one of the hardest things I experienced here. They are still living an old lifestyle; we need to serve them. I didn't expect this because Uncle Jimmy told me that [the couple] is his family so I'll be a part of their family. Then, the family eat together, right? But not over here.*

When she shared this experience with her parents in Fiji, they offered to pay for her airfare to return home, but Vā decided to face the challenges, understanding that different places have different lifestyles. To cope with this and other emotional challenges, she called her family in Fiji frequently and also took solace in prayers with her Fijian church friends in Samoa.

At the end of her first two-year contract, she thought about leaving and trying something new. But by this time she had grown close to the couple and their family; her role as a housegirl in Samoa began to mirror, both physically and emotionally, the responsibilities she had undertaken in Fiji for her own family. She decided to renew the contract for another two years, partly because she felt that her employers did not even doubt that she would renew it. At the end of the second contract, her dilemma had become worse because the elderly couple had become even more reliant on her. At the time of the interview, Vā had been working for the couple for five years; she was in the

middle of her third contract, and was again debating whether or not to renew it.

Vā still does not eat with the family, but she has become accustomed to it, and she said that despite this she feels like she is a part of the family. She said that the couple treats her well and gives her financial support, aside from her salary, when she needs to send money home for familial, village and church events. They also offer parental advice and assist her to save money for herself.

Vā said that she is satisfied with her life in Samoa overall. She is particularly fond of the slow pace and laid-back atmosphere that characterizes Samoan life, which is reminiscent of the relaxed lifestyle she enjoyed as a child in her village in Fiji. She perceives life in Fiji today as being too fast-paced for her liking, marked by rapid technological advancements, even in villages.

Vā also said that job hunting is a challenge in Fiji, including in urban centres like Suva, where even individuals with skills face difficulties finding work due to the large population. She felt that Samoa offered more opportunities in the job market, especially for skilled workers. Vā believes that Fijians possess higher skills on average than their Samoan counterparts, making job hunting in Samoa relatively easier for Fijians. This belief is supported by a 2019 ILO report, which attributes Fijian success in securing overseas employment to Fiji's more advanced education and skill-training systems, compared to other countries in the Pacific Islands region.

Vā said she was aware of many instances in which companies in Samoa actively recruit Fijians, offering attractive salary packages that are better than those available in Fiji. So although Samoa has a lower minimum wage than Fiji, Samoa is appealing to skilled Fijians. Another attraction of Samoa for Fijians is that it is easier to obtain work permits and visas in Samoa than in some other destinations, such as the Marshall Islands and Australia, which are popular choices for Fijian migrant workers.

Vā said that many people from her village, including her brother, had worked in Australia under a Pacific labour mobility scheme. Vā would like to apply for the scheme and work as a caregiver in Australia for four years. This plan would enable her to save sufficient funds to start a canteen business she has been thinking about and buy additional cows for the family farm, which was initiated with the funds she sent home from Samoa. To pursue this goal, however, she would have to inform her employer that she would not be renewing her contract. Knowing that the couple relies on her now more than

ever, Vā said she felt guilty about the prospect of leaving them. She has asked her relatives in Fiji if anybody would like to take over her job, but she has yet to find someone.

> *You know, it's hard [to leave], because [my employers] are old and find it difficult to accept new things and new people. People of their age cannot handle changes easily. If I tell them I want to move on, they might get offended, thinking that they did not treat me well, and that's why I don't want to renew the contract. It's not that. I just want to do something new. But it's difficult for them to accept. You know, when I went home [to Fiji] last time for a break, I was supposed to stay there for two months. But after a couple of weeks, [my employer] called me, asking me to come home early because [his wife] needed someone to help her and that someone must be someone she can trust. So I came back early [laugh]. They are getting very old and need me more; that's why it's hard to tell them. I'm praying to God for the right time. God's time.*

Vā's father had pushed her to take a job in Samoa. It was his way of urging her to stop sacrificing herself for the family and live her life fully. Instead, she now sacrifices herself for a Samoan family. She finds herself torn between love for her employers and love and duty to her family.

In May 2023, she learned that her mother was sick, so she really wanted to go home to see her. But when I interviewed Vā in November, she said that although she wanted to go home for Christmas, because she had not spent Christmas with her family since moving to Samoa five years ago, she would not be going home because she knew her employers' children, grandchildren and relatives would be visiting them from overseas for Christmas, and they would need her there to help.

Given Samoa's high employment rate, some people question the recruitment of foreign domestic workers under FEEP. Vā's story illustrates that domestic workers are not only valuable because of their skills and qualifications, but also for their personal attributes. The caregiving skills Vā possesses may not be scarce in Samoa's labour market, but her dedication and family-like love for the employer couple and her caring spirit are not something that employers can easily find locally.

Kevin: Seeking an opportunity for self-improvement

Kevin is a hardworking man with a bachelor's degree in education and a diploma in broadcasting. In his home country in West Africa he worked full time as a mathematics teacher at a middle school for eighteen years while also working as a part-time journalist at a government-owned radio station.

Kevin's journey to Samoa began when he was approached by an acquaintance, a fellow countryman, who asked if he was interested in a job opportunity in Australia. This acquaintance, Ben, was seeking a diligent and skilful person to help set up a new business. Kevin seized the opportunity and borrowed the money (WST2,500) required by Ben to process his travel documents. However, upon receiving the visa Kevin was surprised to find that it indicated Samoa as the country of issue, not Australia. When he questioned Ben about this, Ben said that Samoa was just a transit place en route to Australia.

When Kevin arrived in Samoa four years ago, he discovered that Ben was actually in Samoa, and it was here that he was attempting to set up a business. However, the visa Kevin had received did not permit him to work in Samoa. Reflecting on that time, Kevin recalls:

> *After two days and three days passed, nothing happened. Even when I urged Ben to fix my visa, he only gave me a series of run-arounds. Finally, he told me, "You're not going anywhere, so it's better to marry a local girl to get a work permit". I didn't have money to return home, so I had to start work immediately. I had no choice. Ben advised me to break up with my girlfriend back home, so I did. I even ended up helping Ben set up his business. I met my wife at a nearby café where she worked. Two weeks later, we got married. I went to see her auntie, with whom she was staying, and visited her parents in Savai'i for permission.*

When asked if the Samoan family were supportive of their daughter marrying a foreigner whom she had just met, he explained:

> *Yeah, they were all supportive, probably because they saw me as a hardworking person. So did my wife. At the time of our marriage, there was no affection between us, but the chemistry grew as we spent time together. Whatever it was, I really needed to start working.*

Within two weeks of filing for marriage, Kevin started the process of obtaining a work permit through marriage. He soon found a job as a mathematics teacher at a private school. At the time of the interview in 2023, Kevin had three jobs: working as a full-time mathematics teacher at a secondary school, as a part-time tutor at a privately-owned learning centre on Saturdays and as a hotel receptionist some nights. He and his wife were living separately. He said that she was in Savai'i looking after her sick mother. His wife and 3-year-old child visit him in Apia from time to time. Kevin sends money to his wife for the care of their child. He also provides financial support for her family's *fa'alavelave,* but otherwise he invests his earnings to advance

his qualifications. At the time of the interview he was taking an online master's course in education offered by an American institution.

Kevin sees Samoa as a land of opportunity because salaries are higher here than in his country and jobs are easy to find. He recalled when he received the first fortnight's salary from the school he worked at as a mathematics teacher:

> *I was so surprised to receive a much higher salary [compared to his home country] from just working for two weeks. It was WST900. That's six times higher than what I got as a long-experienced teacher back home. Samoa's living expenses are high, but much better than in my country. The economy is much bigger there, but the minimum wage there is only [the equivalent of] WST1.60. My current salary is WST32,000 per year, but I was told it will be increased to WST60,000 once I complete my MA [master's degree]. My tutoring job is okay; it's WST45 for each session. The hotel job pay is small, WST5 per hour, but I don't mind it because it's a supplement to support my study.*

Asked if he thought finding a job and working in Samoa was easier than what he experienced in his country, he explained:

> *Finding job here is easy. In my country, experience and connections are very important to get a job. But you need a job to get experience. But in Samoa, if you have qualifications, you can get a job easily. If I were Samoan, it would have been much easier to find a job because some jobs, like UN ones, are kept for Samoans only.*

Kevin plans to continue studying (a PhD programme) as he understands the power of qualifications in Samoa. He would like to become an educator at an academic institution in Samoa or somewhere else where the pay is good. He will visit his home country, but does not plan to return to live there due to its unstable political and economic situation.

Kevin was not the only person duped by Ben to come to Samoa. Kevin has met five other African men who also fell for the trick. Like Kevin, they were advised upon their arrival to look for a local woman to marry so that they could work in Samoa legally. They were disappointed and furious with Ben, but also desperate for a job, and none of them had sufficient funds to return home, so they followed Ben's advice and married local women (some had to first divorce their African wives). All of the men now have good jobs and are happily married; some have children. With the support of a local businessman whom they met through a church, Kevin and his African counterparts hired a lawyer to sue Ben for his immigration scam, but Ben fled Samoa before legal action could be taken.

Although he was duped to come to Samoa, Kevin described his experience in Samoa as being positive overall. He has gained supportive friends like the businessman mentioned above, and he has a job that pays higher than similar work back home, enabling him to afford to study for higher qualifications. He said that the best part of life in Samoa was that he met his wife. “She was very supportive when I was going through immigration processes and needed help the most. She was always there.”

Common aspirations

The three migrants I interviewed have had different experiences, but overall they perceive Samoa as a good place to live and work. Sam found Samoa’s lack of heated business competition favourable, as it enables him to embark on entrepreneurial initiatives — an opportunity he would not be able to pursue in more-competitive China. Contrary to the common perception, some of the new Chinese migrants coming to Samoa and the Pacific may not harbour hidden agendas, as shown by Sam’s journey.

For Vā, coming to Samoa was more of a social opportunity than an economic one, allowing her to break away from the status quo and live her life more fully. However, she has found herself on the horns of an emotional dilemma – unable to leave her family-like employer and move on to next phase of her life. Vā’s story sheds light on the controversial issue of giving FEEPs to domestic workers in the context of Samoa’s high unemployment rate. In the case of Vā, it was not her skills or qualifications that the employer could not find in the domestic market, as regulated by FEEP, instead, it was her emotional intelligence and compassion which led to mutual attachment between the employee and employer that made her an irreplaceable housegirl. Vā’s repeated renewal of her contract is a sign of a good employer-employee relationship. This indicates that the FEEP system may need to assess not only the quality of workers, but also the quality of employers.

Kevin’s story and those of other migrant workers indicates that individuals are being duped into labour migration in Samoa and individuals are engaging in deceptive practices, such as marrying locals to obtain a work permit. Despite Kevin’s challenging experiences, he still considers Samoa a good place to work, primarily because the pay is higher than that in his home country. Although his country boasts a larger economy and population than Samoa, Kevin sees Samoa as offering better opportunities to save for investment in his education. He found obtaining a job in Samoa easy when candidates have

qualifications, and he is therefore investing in advancing his academic qualifications so that he can secure a higher-paid position. However, he says the most precious thing he found in Samoa was his wife, who supported him throughout, even though marrying a local woman was initially not his intention. The morality of marriage for citizenship is a complex issue, but Kevin's story illustrates that such marriages can bring skills to the workforce in Samoa.

Sam, Vā and Kevin have each found socioeconomic niches that benefit their situations. These niches might not be perceived as advantageous by local Samoans, who have opportunities to migrate to countries where wages are significantly higher, but the stories of these migrant workers illustrate the common aspirations and experiences of migrants worldwide, transcending ethnicity, nationality and geography.

A destination country for migrant workers

As this article has shown, individuals from Asia, the Pacific and Africa are migrating to Samoa for reasons similar to those of Samoans moving abroad — the pursuit of higher incomes and, ultimately, what is perceived as 'a better life'.

A 2019 report by the ILO anticipates a significant increase in opportunities for labour migration to the Pacific Islands region in the future. This trend has already been observed in several Pacific countries. Papua New Guinea and Fiji already have substantial numbers of incoming labour migrants, and in the Cook Islands and Palau incoming labour migrants constitute about 25 percent of the population (ILO, 2019:7-8). Tonga, which is among the countries sending the most workers abroad via Pacific labour mobility schemes, has recruited numerous workers from Fiji across various industries to fill their domestic labour shortages (ILO, 2019:23).

Although Samoa currently has a relatively small number of foreign-born workers in proportion to its population, it is likely that if emigration flows continue to increase, Samoa will become dependent on foreign workers to fill the local workforce gaps created by Pacific labour mobility schemes. In such a scenario, understanding the experiences of incoming labour migrants and finding ways to ensure that such workers are treated well by employers and are not discriminated against will be crucial for Samoa to become an attractive destination country.

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