

“REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCES OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN SAMOA”

Presentation by Tuatagaloa Aumua Ming Leung Wai, Attorney-General of Samoa at the *China and the Pacific: The View From Oceania Conference*, National University of Samoa, Apia, Samoa, 25th February 2015.

Introduction

1. The experience of the Chinese community in Samoa has not only been challenging, but also very rewarding, particularly for those who stayed in Samoa and their descendants. The Chinese have been migrating to Samoa in the last 150 years. This paper will explore the nature of the challenges faced by the Chinese in Samoa. The paper will also touch on the contribution of the Chinese community to the development of Samoa.

My Background

2. My great-grandfather Leung Wai (a.k.a. Ah Wai or Avai) is from Si Ju, Datang, Taishan, Jiangmen, Guangdong, China. He was born on 12 October 1886. One week after he got married, he left China to come to Samoa around the age of 24. He was assigned to work as an assistant to Dr Oskar Thieme.¹ He married Lealofi-o-Amoa Luafalealii Falenaoti Segi of Saasaai and Lano, Savaii. He managed to avoid repatriation and became a successful businessman in Samoa.² He had various businesses such as a laundry, butchery, plantations, farms, restaurants and taxis. His eldest son Ming (my grandfather whom I am named after) was sent to China at the tender age of 8 for education. Ming was born on 9th February 1918 at Saasaai, Savaii. He went to China around 1926 and stayed with my great-grandfather's first wife who raised him as her own. Ming later married a Chinese woman named Hung (Hana) Lock (my grandmother) from Gang Bei-Cun, Taishan, Jiangmen, Guangdong, China. Before they got married, a lot of questions were asked by Hana's family because Ming (who was half-Samoan) was tall and had brown skin. This was unusual because the Chinese in Southern China are normally fair skinned and relatively short in terms of height.
3. The hardship experienced by the Chinese population during the 2nd Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) resulted in the death of the 4 eldest children of Ming and Hana in China. My grandmother Hana used to tell me of how they would hide in the bushes to avoid the Japanese soldiers and eat grass to survive as there was no food. The only child of Ming and Hana born in China that survived was my father Bee Leung Wai. There were doubts about whether he will survive given the harsh conditions in China at the time so he was

¹ Leung Wai Family Reunion Magazine, Samoa (July 1999) at p. 4.

² Crocombe, Ron *Asia in the Pacific Islands Replacing the West*, IPS Publications, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji (2007) at p. 32.

given the name “Bee” which means baby in Cantonese. Ming, Hana and Bee managed to leave China in 1950 to come to Samoa by ship via Sydney, Australia. Money to pay for their passage was sent over by my great-grandfather Leung Wai. Earlier funds that were sent over by Leung Wai never reached Ming.

4. Bee Leung Wai married my mother Taituuga Kuinivia Aumua from Sapunaoa and Poutasi, Falealili, Samoa. I am married to Fiti Fuimaono L. Vito and we have four sons.

Four Waves of Chinese Migration

5. I have decided to divide the Chinese migration to Samoa into four time periods:
 - (a) First wave (1840s to 1890s) – Chinese free settlers;
 - (b) Second wave (1900s to 1930s) – Chinese contract labourers (indentured labourers);
 - (c) Third wave (1950s to 1990s) – Full blooded Chinese who are related to Chinese residing in Samoa; and
 - (d) Fourth wave (2000 to present day) – Full blooded Chinese who have relatives in Samoa and full blooded Chinese who have no blood connection to Samoa.
6. Samoa’s Bureau of Statistics does not have any records relating to the number of Chinese residing in Samoa (present and past) so I have had to rely on the few books that I came across during my research, my own experience and conversations with Chinese living in Samoa (both full blooded Chinese and part Chinese). I did not come across any records or evidence of Chinese migrating to Samoa during the Second World War so that period (1940s) is deliberately left out from my “four waves” of Chinese migration to Samoa. The records I did manage to obtain in relation to the number of Chinese immigrants in the third and fourth waves of migration were inadequate so I have kept my paper brief in relation to those two waves and my observations are based mostly on what I have experienced, witnessed and heard.

First Wave of Chinese Migration 1840s – 1890s

7. It appears from the literature available that the few Chinese settlers who migrated to Samoa in the first wave were successful with the business ventures that they pursued in Samoa. This is no surprise given the industrious nature and hard work ethic shared by many Chinese. Furthermore, it is likely that the environment at the time allowed them to start their own businesses. Whether they suffered discrimination, it is difficult to know as I was not able to find any relevant material. But what is clear is that these early Chinese settlers thrived economically. I will mention a few of these early Chinese settlers.

8. One of the first Chinese free settlers was Ah Sue. 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 at the time.³

9. Another Chinese free settler at the time was Ah Ching from the Fukien Province in China.⁴ He left China in his teens as a crew member on a small trading schooner sailing the South Seas. After 10 years at sea, Ah Ching decided to settle in Samoa. He married Faatupu Leiatualetaua Leota, the daughter of a chief from Manono and had 10 children. He initially struggled with starting his own business but later became a successful proprietor with 3 separate stores and a bakery and came to own a lot of property, including 10 acres of land at Vailoa. The current location of the Samoa Life Assurance Corporation's headquarters in Samoa's central business district was where one of his shops was located.⁵ He even went on to form a Traders' Association with other European traders.⁶ His success enabled him to send three of his sons (Arthur, Avoke and Edward) and a daughter (Bertha) to China for education. Arthur, Avoke and Bertha returned to Samoa. Edward unfortunately died in China. The Halecks, a successful business family in both American Samoa and Samoa are descendants of Bertha.⁷ I play golf with the Very Manaia Golf School (made up mainly of former students of Marist Brothers school) and one of its members is Muagututagata Joe Ah Ching, a son of Avoke. He 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 in Utah, USA whose father is Vena Ah Ching, son of Arthur Ah Ching.

10. Another Chinese free settler who came to Samoa in the first wave of Chinese migration was Ah Mu.⁸ He came around 1875. He was "adopted" by British sailors at a very young age when their vessel called into one of the Chinese ports. 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, shoeing horses, dairy, and a Ford car dealership.

11. Ah Mu was instrumental in bringing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to Samoa and was the first Chinese to be a Mormon in Samoa. Before that he was a

³ Tom, Nancy Y. W. *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa 1875-1985 The Dragon Came From Afar*, Western Sāmoa Historical & Cultural Trust, Commercial Printers Ltd, Apia, Sāmoa (1986) at p. 38.

⁴ Ibid at p. 40.

⁵ Conversations with Muagututagata Joe Ah Ching.

⁶ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 40.

⁷ Conversations with Muagututagata Joe Ah Ching.

⁸ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 42.

Catholic.⁹ It is said that he provided the land whilst Ah Ching provided the finances for the LDS Church.¹⁰ Currently, the LDS Church owns a big block of land at Pesega where it houses its temple, school, churches, flats and sports field. Most of this land was gifted by Ah Mu to the Church.

12. One of Ah Mu's grandsons (M. Ah Mu) fought in World War 1 and had served in France and Palestine.¹¹ Some descendants of Ah Mu have used "Rivers" as their surname. There is a prestigious private primary school called "Ah Mu Academy" located at Pesega named after this famous early Chinese settler. Constance Tafua-Rivers, one of the senior lawyers in my Office is a descendant of Ah Mu. One of Ah Mu's well known descendant is Hon. Hans Joe Keil who was a former Cabinet Minister and is a successful businessman.
13. In 1880, the then King of Samoa, Susuga Malietoa Laupepa issued a declaration banning further Chinese from settling in Samoa. It appears that the consuls that represented the European settlers applied pressure on Malietoa Laupepa to issue such declaration.¹² It is likely that the commercial success enjoyed by these early Chinese settlers created resentment amongst the European settlers who were their main business competitors. Despite the existence of such declaration, Malietoa Laupepa's government at the time did not stop subsequent Chinese from settling in Samoa. The Chinese free settlers that came after 1880 during the First Wave of Chinese migration included Ah Siu, Ah Fook, Ah Soon, Ah Kiau, Ah Yen, Ah You, Ah Chong, Ah Gee and Ah Man.¹³
14. It is likely that Malietoa Laupepa was not serious about his declaration, otherwise he would not have allowed these Chinese to settle in Samoa after 1880. These Chinese free settlers later successfully petitioned Governor Solf of the German Administration in 1904 to be treated as free settlers so they can continue to live in Samoa and operate their businesses.¹⁴ The Chinese who came before 1880 were already granted free settler status.
15. The Chinese settlers who came in the first wave of migration became successful businessmen in their own right. For example Ah Soon married Katherine the daughter of another early Chinese settler Ah Kuoi.¹⁵ Ah Soon knew how to speak German after having served as a steward on a German cruiser called HIGMS Cormorant. He later

⁹ Conversations with Brent Rivers.

¹⁰ Conversations with Muagututagata Joe Ah Ching.

¹¹ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 42.

¹² Meleisea, Malama *The Making of Modern Sāmoa*, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji (1987) at p. 168.

¹³ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 43.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid at p. 42.

settled in Samoa after 1899 and ran a successful banana plantation, grocer and tailor shops and taxi business in Apia. He also served as a cook and furniture maker. He was active in community activities and was able to send 2 of his sons (Joseph and Philip) for education at St Joseph's College, Hong Kong and Lingnam University in Guangzhou (then known as Canton).¹⁶ One of his descendants Lealiifano Joseph Soon was the Director of the Department of Lands in the 1980s. One of his daughters (Frances) is the wife of Lefau Harry Schuster (former Judge of the District Court of Samoa and one of the current Members of Parliament for Vaimauga I Sisifo Constituency).

Second Wave of Chinese Migration 1900s – 1930s

16. Samoan people were comfortable with their lifestyle of subsistence living so did not want to work in the commercial plantations owned by the Europeans.¹⁷ Another contemporary of the time said 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”.¹⁸ This meant that the European owners of these plantations had to look outside of Samoa for labour. Initially labour was brought from the Solomon Islands by the administration of German New Guinea but mainly for the benefit of the German company known as *Deutsche Handelsund Plantagen-Gesellschaft (“DHPG”)*.¹⁹ This meant labour shortage faced by most of the other planters in Samoa continued. In 1900, plantations had grown to about 7,773 acres, the largest being DHPG which had plantations totalling 4,933 acres.²⁰ By 1900, a private organisation of planters and traders looked to China for labourers.²¹

17. This resulted in the recruitment of indentured labourers from Swatow, Fukien Province, China. The vessel *S.S. Decima* landed in Apia on 28 March 1903 which had 289 Chinese labourers on board.²² The planters found the Chinese labourers to be hard working and reliable and therefore wanted more labourers from China. Following the success of the first boatload of Chinese labourers, the German Administration took over the recruitment of Chinese labourers.²³

18. As a result, more Chinese labourers were brought to Samoa during the German Administration in 1905 (528), 1906 (575) and 1908 (351), 1909 (535), 1911 (551) and

¹⁶ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at pp. 42 & 48.

¹⁷ Campbell, Persia Crawford *Chinese Coolie Emigration to Countries Within the British Empire*, P S King & Sons Ltd, Orchard House, Westminster, London (1923) at p. 88.

¹⁸ Decker, John Alvin *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, Oxford University Press, London & New York (1940) at p. 88.

¹⁹ *Ibid* at p. 90.

²⁰ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² *Ibid* at p. 4.

²³ Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, at p. 91.

1913 (1039). From 1903 to 1913, a total of 3,868 Chinese labourers were brought to Samoa.

19. The Chinese labourers were expected to work 9 ½ hours a day (or 9 hours if the day was hot when it reached 100 degrees Fahrenheit (equivalent to 38 degrees Celsius),²⁴ for six days a week. They were to be paid 10 marks per month (equivalent of about US\$2.40 at the time). They did not work on the major Chinese holidays and were not entitled to pay if they became sick due to fault of their own.²⁵ The advice to the plantation owners to properly treat the Chinese labourers by the then editor of *Samoanische Zeitung* newspaper fell on deaf ears.²⁶ The Chinese labourers were badly treated, especially when flogging was allowed (but limited to once a week and maximum of 20 lashers per person).²⁷ Flogging could result from:

“hiding, laziness, running away, disobedience, insulting behaviour, breaking the curfew and even for not bowing low enough in respect of their masters.”²⁸

20. There were also criminal sanctions (eg fine or imprisonment) for breach of certain clauses of their employment contracts. Leaving the plantation was also not allowed unless permission was given by the employer.

21. Despite the hardship faced by the Chinese labourers, they were hard workers and were described to be “the most reliable and trustworthy labour yet available” by the weekly newspaper *Samoanische Zeitung*.²⁹

22. The harsh working conditions and ill treatment of the Chinese labourers was brought to attention of the Chinese Government and this hampered further recruitment of Chinese labourers during the German Administration.³⁰ The Chinese Government would not allow the recruitment of more Chinese labourers until the German Administration improved their working conditions. The German Administration acquiesced and agreed to improve matters by raising the wages of the Chinese labourers and providing better housing and medical care. There was even an agreement to abolish flogging. The German Administration also allowed China to send over a Chinese Consul (Lin Jun Chao) in 1909 to look after the interests of the Chinese labourers.³¹ At the time, the German

²⁴ Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, at p. 111.

²⁵ Field, Michael J. *Mau Sāmoa's Struggle for Freedom*, Pasifika Press, Auckland, New Zealand (1984) at p. 27.

²⁶ *Samoanische Zeitung* of 28/03/08 as cited in *Ibid* at p. 27.

²⁷ Field, *Mau Sāmoa's Struggle for Freedom*, p. 28.

²⁸ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at pp. 4 & 5.

²⁹ *Ibid* at p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibid* at p. 5.

³¹ *Ibid* at pp. 4, 5 & 82.

Administration had already established the position of Chinese Commissioner to look after the welfare of the Chinese labourers.³²

23. The recruitment of Chinese labourers was allowed to continue and by 1913, a total of 3,868 labourers were brought over to Samoa. Following the repatriation of some of the Chinese labourers, there were 2,184 Chinese indentured labourers working in Samoa by 1914.³³
24. On 29th August 1914, New Zealand's Expeditionary force landed in Samoa and replaced the German Administration. This new military administration tried to improve working conditions for the Chinese labourers and also commenced wholesale repatriation of the Chinese labourers. Between 1914 and 1918, three major repatriations took place which reduced the Chinese labour force in Samoa to about 832.³⁴ The labour shortage had an adverse effect on the planting industry and therefore greatly angered the planters who were facing bankruptcy. Matters were made worse by the canker disease on the cocoa plantations and devastation caused by the rhinoceros beetle on the coconut plantations. As a result, the planters called for the return of Chinese labourers. The demand for the return of Chinese labourers initially fell on deaf ears because British policy at the time had just abolished Chinese indentured labour in the Transvaal and Malaysia. However, the unique situation in Samoa requiring the preservation of the plantations in Samoa resulted in a compromise where wholesale repatriations were stopped and some of the Chinese labourers already in Samoa were re-hired for the duration of the First World War.³⁵ Just before New Zealand replaced the military administration of Samoa with a civilian administration, 502 Chinese labourers were brought to Samoa in August 1920.³⁶ Many more Chinese labourers followed: 1921 (959), 1925 (280), 1926 (180), 1928 (456), 1930 (251), 1931 (207) and 1934 (281).³⁷
25. The Chinese indentured labour system in Samoa was heavily criticised by the Labour party (in opposition) in the New Zealand Parliament at the time.³⁸ This resulted in the change by the New Zealand Administration of the indentured labour system to that of "free labour" in 1923 through the passing of the Chinese Free Labour Ordinance 1923. The change to "free labour" system resulted in higher wages³⁹ and allowed the Chinese labourers to change employers upon the satisfaction of the Chinese Commissioner. Any surplus of Chinese labourers was absorbed by the New Zealand Administration as

³² Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at pp. 4 & 73.

³³ *Ibid* at p. 7.

³⁴ Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, at p. 92.

³⁵ *Ibid* at p. 93.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 36.

³⁸ Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, at p. 96.

³⁹ *Ibid* at p. 106.

determined by the Chinese Commissioner.⁴⁰ The free labour system also removed the archaic criminal penalty of a fine or imprisonment for breach of a term of the employment contract.⁴¹ However, the free labour system did not make allowances for sickness and bad weather and a percentage of the wages was deducted to cover medical care.⁴²

Forceful Repatriation

26. Repatriation at the end of the contract period was clearly spelled out in the Chinese labourers' employment contract. The cost of repatriation was to be borne by the employer.
27. The Samoa Immigration Order 1930 also required for immigrants to be repatriated unless granted special dispensation. This Order was later amended in 1947 which allowed the Administrator to remove the immigration status for those Chinese deserving to stay in Samoa.
28. Whilst others welcomed returning home to China, others wanted to remain in Samoa, especially those who had married Samoans and had children. However, forceful repatriation of the Chinese still took place, probably driven by the fear that the Chinese would dominate the many businesses in Samoa due to their "industry and determination to succeed economically".⁴³ The Chinese free settlers were already enjoying such success during such time such as Ah Ching and Ah Sue.
29. The German Administration did not actively enforce the repatriation of the Chinese labourers. Its repatriation rate was about 44% since it repatriated 1684 labourers out of a total of 3868 labourers that were brought to Samoa from China. However, New Zealand's rule under its military administration was more forceful in its repatriation policy when it took over Samoa's administration in August 1914. Its repatriation rate was around 57%. There were 2,184 Chinese labourers in Samoa in 1914 but by 1919, about 1,254 of these labourers were sent back to China.⁴⁴ This was during the first World War and when there was a shortage of vessels.
30. The civilian administration that replaced the military administration was not that strict on the wholesale repatriation of Chinese labourers. The civilian administration had allowed a minority of labourers with good records to be re-engaged.⁴⁵ Some were even

⁴⁰ Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, at p. 97.

⁴¹ Ibid at p. 98.

⁴² Ibid at p. 107.

⁴³ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Sāmoa*, at p. 171.

⁴⁴ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 7.

⁴⁵ Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, at p. 114.

given restricted free settler status. However, such relaxation of the repatriation policy changed in 1936 when the Labour party won the elections in New Zealand. About 168 Chinese labourers who were employed as “domestic servants, artisans, and labourers on plantations other than cocoa plantations” were sent back to China in December 1937.⁴⁶ After 1937, only 326 Chinese labourers remained in Samoa.⁴⁷

31. Of the 200 Chinese labourers that were in Samoa by 1948, 104 were repatriated in mid-1948 when they left on the vessel S.S. *Yunnan* thus leaving around 90 Chinese labourers who then became lawful permanent residents and later on citizens of Samoa with the right to vote.⁴⁸ In addition to the labourers that were not repatriated were those Chinese who were already granted free settler status.
32. It was recorded on 27 April 1951 that 160 Chinese were eligible to vote for the European seats in Parliament.⁴⁹ By 1985, only 32 Chinese indentured labourers remained in Samoa.⁵⁰
33. Those who were successful to be re-engaged as labourers managed to avoid repatriation. Others who had Samoan wives or partners could apply to be exempted from being repatriated but most of the requests were denied.⁵¹ Some Chinese labourers took their sons with them to China. This caused great sadness to their Samoan wives who were not allowed to accompany them since their union was considered illegal at the time.⁵²
34. The forceful repatriation of Chinese labourers was one sad chapter of Samoa’s history. Some Chinese labourers had either married or were in *de facto* relationships with Samoan women. Most also had children. In 1916, about 100 Chinese labourers were married to or in *de facto* relationships with Samoan women and at the time had about 108 Chinese-Samoan children.⁵³ The number of Samoans with Chinese ancestry rose to around 1,000 – 1,500 in 1930.⁵⁴ Despite such strong connections to Samoa, this did not discourage the New Zealand Administration from its policy of returning the Chinese labourers to China.
35. Some of the Chinese labourers had begged to stay but were mostly denied. Their repatriation resulted in many Chinese-Samoan children growing up without their

⁴⁶ Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, at p. 115.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 85 & 86.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* at p 63.

⁵⁰ *Ibid* at p. 71.

⁵¹ *Ibid* at p. 70.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Field, *Mau Sāmoa’s Struggle for Freedom*, at p. 31.

⁵⁴ N. A. Rowe of the New Zealand Administration cited by Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, at p. 172.

fathers. In addition, most Samoan-Chinese were not able to locate or trace their Chinese families. I recall the many descendants of Chinese labourers who came to see my Chinese grandmother about tracing their Chinese ancestors' origins. Generally, only the surnames of Chinese labourers were used when they were converted into English eg Ah Fook, Ah Chong. Converting them back to Chinese was therefore a problem if the first name is not known. No proper records relating to their identification could be found. It also did not help when the labourers were usually referred to at the time by numbers instead of their names, eg Yue Yiek was known as "Coolie No. 398".⁵⁵ Employment contracts and letters exchanged between Government officials and employers mostly referred to the Chinese labourers by their Coolie numbers.⁵⁶

36. Recent discussions with officials of the Chinese Embassy revealed that Samoans descended from Chinese labourers still frequent the Embassy for any information that would help them trace their Chinese ancestors. The officials of the Chinese Embassy, whilst sympathetic, were also not able to help given the paucity of information and associated problems of not knowing their full Chinese names.⁵⁷

37. I am fortunate that my great-grandfather Leung Wai was not repatriated. The reason was that he had sought the help of one of the Tama Aiga, Afioga Mataafa Faumuina Mulinuu I. The Chinese Commissioner had nominated Leung Wai, amongst with a few other Chinese, to be granted restricted free settler status. Such status was granted in 1923 by the then Chief Administrator, General George Richardson.⁵⁸ The free settler status meant Leung Wai was able to freely operate his businesses in Samoa and own properties. I was also fortunate to have visited my great-grandfather's family and grandma Hana's family in Taishan, Guangdong, China in 1988 with my cousin Michael Leitutolu Rasmussen. We were accompanied by my grandmother's brother, Lock Yau Jim and his two sons Wai Keung Lock and Wai On Lock.

Racism

38. Aside from forceful repatriation, the Chinese labourers also experienced racism. Some of the Europeans looked down at them and considered them less than human.⁵⁹ Then it was not prestigious to be part-Chinese, especially when it was the Europeans who had the political and social power.⁶⁰ During German Administration, laws were passed to restrict the movement of Chinese labourers and to keep Samoan women off the

⁵⁵ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at pp. 18-20.

⁵⁶ See exhibits in *Ibid* at pp. 75 – 81.

⁵⁷ Conversations with officials of the Chinese Embassy in Samoa.

⁵⁸ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 44.

⁵⁹ Field, *Mau Sāmoa's Struggle for Freedom*, at p. 55.

⁶⁰ Crocombe, *Asia in the Pacific Islands*, at p. 32.

plantations.⁶¹ Matters did not improve when New Zealand took over the administration of Samoa. Initially, laws were passed to make “laziness” an offence with the maximum fine being 30 shillings.⁶² Subsequent laws were passed by the New Zealand Administration aimed to stop relationships between Chinese and Samoan women. For example, Proclamation 42 issued on 30 January 1917 prohibited Chinese indentured labourers from entering a Samoan house. It was also an offence for a Samoan to allow a Chinese labourer to enter his house. Any person who breached such law was liable to a maximum fine of 5 pounds or maximum imprisonment with labour of 6 weeks. Another proclamation stopped Samoan women from visiting the labour quarters of the Chinese labourers.⁶³

39. New Zealand went further by passing 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”.⁶⁴ This law is found in section 300 of the Constitution Order which prohibited Chinese immigrants who were indentured labourers to marry Samoan women. The penalty for breaching such law was a fine of 20 pounds or 6 months imprisonment. The *Pacific Islands Monthly* (15 July 1939) reported that 34 Chinese labourers and their Samoan wives were imprisoned for breaching such a law. The men were sent to three months in jail whilst the women three days.⁶⁵

40. These discriminatory legislation reflected the racist attitude of some of the influential Europeans at the time towards the Chinese. Such racism was usually veiled in the guise of keeping the Samoan race pure.⁶⁶ There were fears that the Chinese would contaminate the Samoan race. However, it was claimed that unions between Samoans and Europeans were accepted because the children from these unions were of “fair skinned and of Aryan stock”.⁶⁷

41. Sadly, some Samoans also showed anti-Chinese sentiments.⁶⁸ A decree was issued by the Samoan central native administration 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

⁶¹ Keesing pp. 370, 453 as cited by Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, p. 120.

⁶² Proclamation No. 17, 13 May 1915 as cited by Field, *Mau Sāmoa’s Struggle for Freedom*, at p. 31.

⁶³ Proclamation No. 42, January 30, 1917; and Proclamation No. 56, May 1, 1918, NZ Parliament cited by Decker, *Labour Problems in the Pacific Mandates*, at p. 120.

⁶⁴ Field, *Mau Sāmoa’s Struggle for Freedom*, at p. 57.

⁶⁵ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 97.

⁶⁶ Hiery, Hermann Joseph *The Neglected War – The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, Hawaii at p. 169 and Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, at p. 173.

⁶⁷ N. A. Rowe of the New Zealand Administration cited by Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, at p. 172.

⁶⁸ Hiery, *The Neglected War*, at pp. 167-168.

women.⁶⁹ It appeared that pressure was put by the New Zealand Administration at the time on the villages to issue such regulations.⁷⁰

42. This was no surprise given the statements made by the first head of the New Zealand military administration in Samoa that the Chinese were “inferior” and were a threat to the racial purity of Samoa.⁷¹ In addition, he added that Samoans disliked the Chinese. However, his successor Tate disputed this. Tate stated that “The Samoan women recognise the Chinese as better husbands than the Samoan men.”⁷² In fact, before the arrival of the Europeans, mixed marriages were accepted, and at times, valued by the Samoan culture.⁷³

43. When the issue of the repatriation of the last remaining 200 Chinese labourers was discussed by the Fono Faipule, one Faipule commented,

“The acceptance of the Chinese in Samoa is no doubt due to the small number of the Chinese community as compared with over 70,000 Samoans and to the fact that this community is honest, industrious, and above all, of assimilable stock.”⁷⁴

44. The law that prohibited Chinese from marrying Samoans was only removed from the law books in 1961 by the passing of the Marriage Ordinance 1961 which legalised marriages solemnised before 1961 and gave legitimacy to children from such marriages.

Third Wave of Chinese Migration (1950s – 1990s)

45. The third wave of Chinese migration relates mainly to the Chinese immigrants who had blood connections to the Chinese already residing in Samoa. The first of this wave would include my grandfather returning to Samoa with my grandmother and father in 1950.

46. I did not come across any records of others that came immediately after them. But I am aware of other Chinese who came many years after my grandparents who were related to Chinese already in residing in Samoa, eg Wong Kees, Chan Mows, Lee Hangs, Chen Paos, Rongs, Locks, Cais, etc.

47. Most of these Chinese migrated here to find better lives and to help the businesses of their Chinese relatives already living in Samoa. Others came from Hong Kong in the 1980s because of concerns when China again resumes control of Hong Kong.

⁶⁹ Hiery, *The Neglected War*, at p. 168.

⁷⁰ Field, *Mau Sāmoa’s Struggle for Freedom*, at p. 32 and Hiery, *The Neglected War*, at p. 168.

⁷¹ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, at p. 171.

⁷² Field, *Mau Sāmoa’s Struggle for Freedom*, at p. 55.

⁷³ Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, at p. 157.

⁷⁴ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 85.

48. Some of the Chinese that came in this wave chose to make Samoa their home and most married Samoans. Others chose to either return to Hong Kong or migrate to other countries such as New Zealand.
49. The ones that stayed were easily assimilated into the Samoan society, especially the ones who married Samoan women. Most of them became Christians and their applications for Samoan citizenship were always supported by Pastors from the churches they attended. Others attended church in order to learn more about the Samoan people. One claimed that he went to church to also learn English even though he was not a Christian.
50. Whatever their motives were, the majority were determined to learn the culture and Samoan way of life. They showed respect for the laws of Samoa and became part of Samoan society. They claim that they did not experience any racism from the Samoans and found assimilation easy. They love living in Samoa and would only return now and then to China to visit family.
51. One of the most successful of this third wave of Chinese migration is Frankie Cai from Guangzhou, China. He came in 1992 to help his uncle's business. He is married to a Samoan by the name of Mayday and they have two children. They own and operate Frankies which comprises of a mall, wholesale and supermarkets around Samoa.

Fourth Wave of Chinese Migration (2000 to present date)

52. The fourth wave of Chinese migration included the migration of full blooded Chinese who do not have relatives in Samoa. Whilst full blooded Chinese with relatives in Samoa continue to migrate to Samoa in this fourth wave, the number of Chinese immigrants without relatives in Samoa has increased in recent years. Some of them go into the wholesale business whilst others establish and work for construction companies, eg Zheng Construction and Qing Dao Construction. Not all of these Chinese immigrants come directly from China. Some of them came via Tonga and American Samoa where they had also resided. The Chinese immigrants who have relatives in Samoa normally end up working for their relatives. I have not included in this fourth wave the Chinese who came to work on construction projects (eg National Hospital) funded by the Chinese Government. These construction workers normally return to China upon the completion of these projects.

53. In the last four years, 1573 Chinese citizens were granted with permits to enter Samoa issued by the Samoan Government.⁷⁵ These permits allowed Chinese citizens to enter Samoa for various purposes, eg purpose approved by the Minister (eg work in projects funded by the Chinese Government), employment, business investment, visiting family and friends or dependants of those who already have permits to enter Samoa. The majority (723) of those who came to Samoa in the last four years came to work on projects funded by the Chinese Government. 442 were granted employment permits, mostly for those working in construction companies owned by Chinese citizens whilst some work for their relatives already in Samoa. Those who came on visitors' permit numbered 75. 50 permits for business investors were issued. The remaining permits relate to those who came to visit families or were dependents of those already granted with a permit to enter Samoa.
54. It is observed that the majority of Chinese immigrants who migrated to Samoa in this fourth wave are not married to Samoans. Only time will tell whether this situation will change.
55. But there have been criticisms directed by the earlier Chinese migrants against those who came in this fourth wave of migration. One criticism was that some of these "new" Chinese were giving the Chinese in Samoa a bad name because they do not respect or appreciate Samoan culture and way of life. They are also opportunistic and aggressive with their business tactics, sometimes testing the limits of Samoa's laws. It is no surprise that some of these "new" Chinese had attracted bad publicity due to infractions with the law, eg deportation after being declared a prohibited immigrant, fleeing the country after being charged with a serious sexual offence. Others have been issued official warnings for alleged involvement with businesses reserved only for Samoan citizens.⁷⁶
56. Another Chinese who came here in the 1990s said he no longer feels comfortable going to the food market in town because of the taunts and teasing he receives there from the Samoans. He believes that the "new" Chinese do not appreciate Samoan culture and therefore appear rude to the Samoans. In turn, the Samoans do not respect them and therefore teases them. He said if he does have to go to the market, the taunting would stop if he speaks Samoan to the Samoans teasing him. They would usually end up apologising to him.
57. Currently, the Foreign Investment Act 2000 prohibits foreigners from owning or operating certain businesses such as retailing, transport (taxi, buses and rental cars) and traditional garment printing. This law has prevented most from the fourth wave of

⁷⁵ Records of the Immigration Division, Ministry of Prime Minister & Cabinet.

⁷⁶ Records of the Office of the Attorney-General of Samoa.

Chinese migration from owning or operating the businesses reserved only for the citizens of Samoa.

Observation

58. Those are the four waves of Chinese migration to Samoa. Due to time constraints, I was not able to properly research all aspects of the Chinese migration and experience in Samoa, especially for the third and fourth wave of migration. It is my hope that if I do not retire soon, someone will take my paper and build on it in order to publish a thorough and complete account of the Chinese migration to and experience in Samoa.

Success of Chinese in Samoa

59. I will now talk about the rewards reaped by the Chinese who managed to stay in Samoa and their descendants. Whilst the Chinese migrants had faced hardships, their hard work ethic, respect for Samoa's law and culture and perseverance enabled them to be successfully assimilated into Samoan society.

60. Full blooded Chinese such as Chan Mow, Fong and Leung Wai were successful business people and came to be accepted by Samoans as their own. This was helped also by the fact that they married Samoans and had children who identified themselves as Samoans with Chinese blood.

61. The Chinese indentured labourers that managed to stay in Samoa contributed to the development of Samoa's economy. Others went into business whilst others continued to work in plantations, either for others or on their own.

62. In the mid-30s, the Chinese living in Samoa got together to form the Chinese Club. About 500 Chinese were members of this club at one time.⁷⁷ The president of the club was my great-grandfather Leung Wai and its secretary was Ah Kuoi. Concerns with the Second World War prompted the Chinese Club to collect from each of their members 3 pounds per annum to be sent to the Government in China during the war.⁷⁸

63. The Chinese Club was later registered as an incorporated society in November 1963 as the "Chinese Association of Western Samoa". Those that signed the society's Constitution and Rules included, amongst others, Chan Mow, Ming Leung Wai (my grandfather), Li Hang (father of Papalii Niko Lee Hang, Member of Parliament and former Minister of Finance), Chan Chui, Chan Kau, Chiu Lik, Chan Boon, Ah Fook, Chan Tung, Chan Chui, JM Ah Chong, JT Soon and H Ah Kuoi.

⁷⁷ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Samoa*, at p. 100.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

64. The Chinese Association of Western Samoa still exists to this day and continues to own properties in the town of Apia (currently leased to Bluebird Hardware & Lumber Ltd which houses about ¼ of this company's large hardware store), Moamoa (fenced but vacant) and Talimatau (over 9 acres of land donated by the King of England in 1921 to be used as a cemetery for Chinese and settlement for disabled Chinese⁷⁹ but the legal conveyance of such land was effected in 1968 by the Samoan Government⁸⁰).
65. The descendants of Chinese that managed to stay in Samoa enjoyed more success in Samoa than their forebears.
66. In terms of business, the families descended from Chinese that have done well include the Ah Likis, Chan Mows and Ah Mus to name a few. The Ah Likis own a commercial bank, construction companies, chain of supermarkets, hardware stores and alcohol & beverage factory to name a few. The Chan Mows, owners of key properties in town, malls and rental buildings, also operate one of the biggest supermarkets and wholesales in Samoa. Hon. Hans Joe Keil is descended from Ah Mu and was a former Cabinet Minister who owns a television station (TV3) and many other businesses which included McDonald's Restaurant before he recently sold it.
67. As for sports, there is Brian Lima who had played in 5 consecutive Rugby World Cups for Samoa and is the first Samoan to be inducted into the Rugby Hall of Fame. His father is veteran accountant Tuliaupupu Pala Lima who is a son of a Chinese immigrant. Pat Lam was a former captain of Manu Samoa. One of the fastest Samoans is Louis Chan Tung. As a teenager he had ran the 100 metre dash in 10.6 seconds in the 1970s and was taken by a sprint coach to the United States of America for further training. One of the All Blacks captain was a Samoan who was also part Chinese by the name of Tana Umaga. The only Samoan to have won Gold Medals in the sport of weightlifting for Samoa at the South Pacific Games for 3 consecutive decades was my father Bee Leung Wai who competed in the bantam weight division. It is unfortunate that I did not inherit any of his sports genes. Chinese who came in the third wave of migration also represented Samoa in the international arena of sports, eg Frankie Cai for badminton and table tennis, Kenny Cai for table tennis, Joe Zhou and Ming Han Chan for weightlifting. Joe Zhou was in the Chinese national weightlifting team before migrating to Samoa.
68. In the political arena, about 20% of the current Members of Parliament of Samoa are of Chinese ancestry. In fact, two of the current Cabinet Ministers are part-Chinese, Hon.

⁷⁹ Tom, *The Chinese in Western Sāmoa*, at p. 100.

⁸⁰ Deed of Conveyance between the Independent State of Samoa and the Chinese Association of Western Samoa Inc. dated 31st May 1968 as recorded in the records of the Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment.

Tuiloma Lameko and Hon. Sala Fata Pinati. Samoans with Chinese ancestry have held seats in every Parliamentary term since Samoa's independence in 1962.⁸¹

69. As for the legal profession, many lawyers and one Supreme Court judge are descendants of Chinese immigrants.⁸² The same can be said of doctors, accountants and engineers. Several CEOs of Government Ministries and Corporations also have Chinese ancestry.⁸³

70. Since Chinese cuisine is popular around the World, it is no surprise that some food considered to be Samoan dishes have Chinese origins. For example, we have *sapa sui* that we never fail to eat on Sundays (which is really the Chinese dish of "chop suey"). Other food with Chinese origins that is popular amongst the Samoans include, keke pua'a ("cha siu bao"), keke saina and masi saina (Chinese pastries), alaisa (rice) and falai fuamoa ("egg foo yong").

Conclusion

71. Samoan society is a very inclusive society. Inter-marriage with persons from other races is generally accepted. This is why the Chinese who migrated to Samoa were able to assimilate with ease into the Samoan society. This assimilation was made easy by the fact that Samoan women are good looking. The children from these Chinese-Samoan unions are also very good looking.

72. But coming back to my point, the inclusive nature of Samoan culture resulted in the acceptance of Chinese, particularly those who married Samoans. The children from these inter-marriages are considered to be Samoans and are accepted by Samoans as their own. Tonga in 2006 experienced riots where parts of its town were burned down. Also badly affected in the fires were businesses owned by Chinese. In the Solomon Islands during the height of its ethnic conflict between the Malaitans and Guadalcanals in 2006, the businesses owned by the Chinese in China Town area were targeted and burnt during the conflict.

73. In Samoa, the Chinese immigrants who have married Samoans and particularly their children, are considered to be Samoans by the local Samoans. This is helped by the fact that most of the early Chinese immigrants respect and learn the Samoan culture, and also marry Samoans.

⁸¹ Records of the Legislative Assembly of Samoa.

⁸² There are only 3 local Supreme Court judges in Samoa.

⁸³ They include Alosamoa Erna Vaai-Aiono (Samoa International Finance Authority), Sa'u Justina Sa'u (Unit Trust Organisation of Samoa), Faumuina Esther Lameko-Poutoa (National Provident Fund), Leiataua Alden Godinet (Samoa Life Assurance Corporation), Tuaimalo Ah Sam (Ministry of Communications & Information Technology) and Toomata Ah Kī (Agriculture Store of Sāmoa).

74. I recall a story told by my Samoan grandfather about the descendants of one of our relatives who had married a foreigner centuries ago. The children from this foreign union were quite often harassed by their Samoan cousins. The high chief of our family at the time told off his children and warned them not to harass their cousins because “ua namu Samoa tamaiti”. This literally means that these kids “smelled Samoan” or in other words, were “Samoan”; and should therefore not be discriminated against.
75. I am fortunate that I am a Samoan who has Chinese, German and Fijian ancestry. Our Honourable Prime Minister remarked in Parliament on Friday 20th February 2015 that the majority of those in Parliament, including himself, are descendants from different races. He emphasised that this is a good thing and shows the tolerance that Samoan culture has for other cultures. As such, Samoans should have zero tolerance towards racism.⁸⁴ He has a good point as we do not want to see in Samoa a repeat of what happened with the riots in the Solomon Islands where shops belonging to Chinese were targeted for destruction.
76. In the early 1900s, Samoa’s economy depended a lot on its plantations. Had it not been for the Chinese indentured labourers, these plantations would have failed. The full blooded Chinese who came to Samoa during the fourth wave of migration need to understand and respect Samoan law and culture to ensure their full acceptance by Samoans.
77. The Chinese who have married Samoans and their descendants are considered to be Samoans and have experienced success in all facets of life in Samoa. The security and safety they enjoy in Samoa is due largely to the inclusiveness nature of the Samoan culture. Such an enabling environment, coupled with their Chinese work ethic and determination to succeed, has enabled them to thrive and contribute to the development of Samoa.

Soifua and God bless.

⁸⁴ See also the Honourable Prime Minister’s Ministerial Statement which touched on this same issue he delivered in Parliament on Monday 26th January 2015 and his earlier comments on 21st January 2015 in *Hansard*.