

Chinese contract labour in the Pacific Islands during the nineteenth century

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Abstract

This paper tells the stories of Chinese contract labour in the Pacific Islands from late in the eighteenth century, when John Meares first took Chinese tradesmen to Vancouver Island to establish a fur station, to the end of the nineteenth century. The sugar industry in Hawai'i used Chinese labour throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, as did the Peruvian guano mines on the Chincha Islands, 1854–1880, where conditions were extremely bad. Stewart's cotton plantation on Tahiti employed Chinese contract labour, 1865–1872, and the German colony of New Guinea, 1891–1903. Only two of these schemes (in Peru and Tahiti) led to permanent Chinese settlement, although contract labour in the early twentieth century also produced Chinese communities in Nauru and Western Samoa.

Keywords

Chinese contract labour; contract labour, Pacific; contract labour, nineteenth century

IN 1923, A YOUNG AUSTRALIAN by the name of Persia Crawford Campbell, a graduate of the University of Sydney, published a remarkable book entitled *Chinese Coolie Emigration to the Countries within the British Empire*. As a student at the London School of Economics, she acknowledges her debt to her 'beloved and inspiring teacher' Professor Graham Wallis, as well as to Dr Bronislau Malinowski, and the Hon. Wm Pember Reeves, who had been a minister in the Liberal government of Richard Seddon in New Zealand in the 1890s. 'King Dick' was rabidly anti-Chinese, and Pember Reeves, as his minister of labour, vigorously opposed Chinese immigration to New Zealand at that time. When Seddon raised the poll tax from ten to a hundred pounds per person in 1896, Pember Reeves suggested it should be raised to five hundred. 'We are not going to have a mass of corruption like this thrust into our midst,' he said in Parliament (Ng 1959: 24).

In a preface to Campbell's book, Pember Reeves praises her reformist spirit, indeed expresses nostalgic regret for the loss of his own youthful enthusiasm for reform, having retired from New Zealand politics to an academic role at the LSE (London School of Economics). Nevertheless, he gently chides her for seeming 'to understate the case against Chinese immigration' in New Zealand and Australia. 'As one gradually constructs a picture and history of the Chinese coolie labour systems,' he writes, 'one wonders at first how these sinister experiments, so unattractive at their best, so repulsive at their worst, came to be tried in civilized countries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (Reeves 1923: x). By 1923, according to Pember Reeves, Chinese indentured labour remained in only one 'small Polynesian archipelago', referring to (Western) Samoa. He was wrong about that, for there were contract Chinese labourers on both Nauru and Banaba (Ocean Island) when he wrote. Earlier, however, contracting as labourers had been a major factor in the migration of Chinese into the Pacific, and it is this topic that I wish to address in this paper: Chinese contract labour in the Pacific during the nineteenth century.

Chinese contract labour was first introduced into the Pacific in 1788, when Captain John Meares brought fifty skilled workers and seamen from Canton on the *Felice* to build a fur-trading station at Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island, now British Columbia (Kuck 1946: 33). Ten years earlier,

Captain James Cook had reported the abundance of furs on the northwest coast of North America, but the fur trade there did not begin until 1785 (Quimby 1948: 247), following an act passed by the British Parliament on the other side of the world. The Commutation Act of 1784 lowered the duty on tea from 112% to 12%, halving the price overnight and consequently raising the demand for tea in Britain and its colonies (Willmott 1995: 131; Zhuang 1993: 127). While the British East India Company began to trade in opium in a big way, 'free traders' scurried all over the Pacific in search of valuable goods to trade for tea at Canton. Sandalwood was one such good.¹ Furs were another.

The Chinese that Captain Meares brought to Nootka were mostly carpenters and blacksmiths, who, with some assistance from local labour, built a two-storey fortified house and a forty-ton ship named *North West America* to trade along the coast, the first ship built in western Canada (Meares 1791: 41). We do not know the terms of their contracts, but they stayed only a year. Nor is there any record of what happened to them after that, whether they returned to Canton or went elsewhere. The following year, 1789, another forty-five Chinese came to Nootka on an American ship, and a further twenty-nine came with a Captain James Colnett on the *Argonaut*, comprising seven carpenters, five blacksmiths, five masons, four tailors, four cobblers, three seamen and a cook. It is evident from this list that these early contract workers were not simple labourers but skilled tradesmen. None of them, however, stayed very long at Nootka; the last group was captured by the Spanish soon after they arrived and transported to Mexico, where some settled and others returned briefly to Nootka.

The next Pacific site of Chinese contract labour was in the Hawaiian Islands. When Captain Cook visited them (then the Sandwich Islands) in 1778, he found sugarcane growing wild 'without culture almost everywhere', but no one had the technology to render sugar from it. In fact, a quarter of a century passed before the sugar industry began in Hawai'i, when a Chinese arrived at Lanai in 1802 aboard a sandalwood ship (Torbert 1852: 149). He stayed for a year, extracting sugar from the native cane. This man brought with him a stone mill and boilers from China, so he must have had prior knowledge of Hawai'i's wild sugarcane—but whence? Speculation among historians includes

two possibilities: either that he had previously visited Hawai'i on another sandalwood expedition or that he was one of the Chinese returning with Meares on the *Felice* a dozen years before (Barth 1964: 185; 'Chinese Merchant-Adventurers' 1974: 4).

After this Chinese man left Lanai in 1803, there was another twenty-year gap before sugar was again made in Hawai'i, also by Chinese, this time on Maui ('Chinese Merchant-Adventurers' 1974: 4) but we do not know the scale of this operation. A Mr William French opened a sugar factory on Kauai in 1835 employing Chinese labour (ibid. 5). During the period 1820 to 1840, four Chinese residents in Hawai'i brought six Cantonese 'sugar-masters' from China to assist the fledgling industry, which by this time was relying on sugarcane plantations for its raw materials (Kai 1974: 42).² It is altogether likely, therefore, that Chinese contracted labour worked on these plantations as well, although two sources state that the first Chinese contract labourers arrived in Hawai'i in 1852 (Char & Char 1975: 131; Glick 1975: 136).

These sources are referring to 195 Chinese who arrived from Amoy (Xiamen) aboard the *Thetis* in January 1852. The Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society, which grouped the Caucasian planters in the islands, had discussed at their inaugural meeting in 1850 the need to import plantation labour, and had agreed that Chinese labour would be more accessible and cheaper than European. They were also familiar with 'Chinese sugar planters and sugar millers [who] were already in the Hawaiian Islands' (Char & Char 1975: 129). Accordingly, they contracted a Captain John Cass to bring labourers from China, and he sailed twice to Amoy to bring three hundred workers on five-year contracts at \$36 per year plus passage, food, clothing and housing (ibid. 131).³

It is interesting that these first contract workers were Hokkien, not Cantonese. An historical connection between Amoy (Xiamen) and Manila, brought about through the three centuries of Spanish galleon trade between Manila and Mexico, meant that Amoy was the preferred port for recruiting Chinese labour, often called 'Manila men' by the recruiting agents. Glick speculates that the reason almost all of these labourers returned to China at the end of their contracts and why very few Hokkien migrated to Hawai'i thereafter is that there were no Hokkien companies in Honolulu, since all the

Chinese merchants were Cantonese at the time. Consequently, Hokkien labourers could see no future commercial opportunities beyond their contracts (Glick 1975: 138). As Professor Wang Gungwu has taught us, Huagong (Chinese labourers) without Huashang (Chinese merchants) are unlikely to produce a Huaqiao (sojourner) community (Wang 1989: 33ff.). When Chinese contract labour resumed in 1864, all the workers came via Hong Kong and were Cantonese (Glick 1975: 138).⁴

The sugar industry continued to contract Chinese labour until the end of the nineteenth century—altogether 56,720 between 1852 and 1899, according to Doug Munro (1990: xliii). '[By] the early 1880s, about half the 10,000 plantation workers were Chinese,' writes Colin Newbury (1980a: 12–13), but the anti-Chinese prejudice that Pember Reeves expressed was also evident among Americans, and by the turn of the century Chinese workers had been replaced by Japanese, Koreans, Portuguese and Filipinos (*ibid.*). Hawaiian, Japanese, German and Portuguese labour had already been used on some plantations since 1876, when the sugar industry suddenly blossomed because the Reciprocity Treaty allowed unrefined sugar into the USA duty-free (Liu 1984: 196) but Chinese contract labour predominated until about 1890. So-called 'penal contracts' were abrogated in 1900 by the annexation of Hawai'i to the USA, which did not allow indenture (*ibid.*: 204). During the 1890s, free labour had gradually replaced contract labour in any case (*ibid.*: 202). Nevertheless, as Andrew Lind pointed out, 'Merely to accept employment in a land several thousand miles from home and kin and among people of alien language and culture left the recruited laborers in almost complete dependence upon the plantation system' (Lind 1938: 216). The next story certainly demonstrates that point.

This story is a horrendous one: the transport of Chinese contract labour to the Chinha Islands off Peru to dig guano. It is told by the remarkable English adventurer, Augustus Lindley, who joined the Taiping rebels in China and wrote a unique inside account of that great rebellion, which the British forces eventually helped suppress. Before that, in the early 1850s, he had shipped out of Sydney on 'the good ship *Colonist* . . . on her way to obtain a cargo of guano' in the Chinchas (Lindley, 1869–74: 155).

Even before slavery was abolished in Peru in 1854, the sugar planters and guano mining companies looked to China for cheap labour, and during twenty-five years some 100,000 Chinese were brought to Peru on eight-year contracts (Hu-DeHart 1998: 254). According to Lindley's account, most of the workers on the Chincha Islands were Chinese 'from Macao, Canton, and other ports in the south of China', whose contracts amounted to 'nothing more or less than a downright slave trade' (Lindley, 1869-74: 178). Unaware of the disgusting and dirty material they would be working, they signed contracts that included repatriation at the end of their term. According to Lindley, conditions were so bad that 'they were driven to work by armed force. Peruvian soldiers with loaded muskets watched over these supposed voluntary labourers as though they were a gang of dangerous convicts. They were brutally treated and beaten . . . for the smallest provocation or offence—often for nothing at all, or for the slightest relaxation from laborious toil at the guano' (*ibid.*). When the Peruvian authorities refused to repatriate the Chinese workers on the pretext that they still owed money for food and other supplies, many of them committed suicide rather than endure endless cruel persecution and bitter hardship.

Some Chinese workers were eventually able to bring the matter to the notice of the world in 1869, and the Peruvian guano mines were shamed into ending the practice of contracting labour from China. The last contracts were signed in 1874 and expired in the 1880s, after which some Chinese remained in Peru as free wage labourers or shop-keepers, the beginning of the contemporary Chinese community in that country (Hu-DeHart 1998: 254-5).

The next major movement of Chinese labour into the Pacific Islands was sparked, as was the first, by events on the other side of the globe. In 1861, the American Civil War disrupted the shipment of raw cotton from America to the Lancashire cotton mills when the Union navy blockaded the ports of the Secessionist southern states. Two million workers were unemployed by the end of that year, and the price of cotton rose suddenly from less than 7d per pound to more than 2s 6d (Langdon 1979: 185). British, Americans and Germans recognised the possibilities of growing cotton in the South Pacific, and plantations were established for a short time in the Samoan archipelago,

on Koror in the Palau group (Willson, Moore & Munro 1990: 79)⁵ and in the Marquesas (Oliver 1975: 209, 214). Douglas Oliver states that during their brief existence, the Marquesan plantations used Chinese indentured labour, but I have found no other sources to corroborate this.⁶

One of the most successful to capitalise on this opportunity was an Irish entrepreneur by the name of William Stewart, who had previously blotted his copybook in Australia with attempted tax evasion.⁷ He had hastily left Sydney to avoid arrest and ended up in Papeete, where he managed to gain permission from the French authorities to establish a plantation at Atimaono on Tahiti-nui and to import a thousand Chinese workers on contract (Newbury 1980b: 170). Altogether, 1,018 arrived on three separate ships in 1865 (Vognin 1995: 142–3; 1994: 238).⁸

Stewart's workers, recruited by an agent in Hong Kong, were almost all Hakka (Coppentrath 1967: 32), most of them from Huiyang Prefecture (Moench 1963: 14).⁹ They had signed contracts to work twelve hours a day for seven years in return for food, housing, medical services, some clothing and a daily wage of 78 centimes (Newbury 1980b: 170; Langdon 1979: 188).

Stewart did very well for the first few years, annually exporting as much as 700,000 pounds of raw cotton to England, and there seemed few problems on the plantation itself. In 1869, however, the price of cotton suddenly fell with the recovery of American exports following the end of the Civil War (Langdon 1979: 193). At the same time, Stewart experienced a number of conflicts with local authorities and relatives, which created major problems at Atimaono. One Chinese, Chim Soo Kung, was guillotined for being involved in a scuffle in which several workers were seriously injured and one died (Coppentrath 1967: 31). Because he had taken the rap for his fellow workers, he was considered a martyr by a later generation, and his body was moved to an imposing tomb in the Chinese cemetery, where he is remembered with an annual ceremony on All Saints Day (Vognin 1995: 144).¹⁰

The indenture system was suspended in French Polynesia in 1872 (Newbury 1980b: 173). Stewart went bankrupt the following year and died soon after (Langdon 1979: 190–5), whereupon the plantation reverted to bush, the buildings disintegrated, and most of the Chinese workers returned to China when their contracts expired (Vognin 1995: 145). Those remaining

in Tahiti became market gardeners, and by the late 1870s they 'had become hawkers and retailers around the port'; some also moved to the Leeward Islands, Raiatea in particular (Newbury 1980b: 173).

Chinese Tahitian scholar Sophie Vognin insists that those who remained in French Polynesia married Tahitian women, whose offspring gradually assimilated into the Polynesian population. She maintains that the contemporary Chinese community therefore stems from immigration in the twentieth century, commencing with Chinese fleeing from the racist towns of West-Coast America to seek a more congenial social environment (1995: 145–6). Vognin's thesis does not explain, however, why the contemporary community is almost entirely Hakka in origin and everyone speaks Hakka rather than Cantonese. I think it more likely that some retained their Chinese (Hakka) identity and became the founders of the Chinese community in Tahiti today. In 1892 a census found 275 Chinese in Tahiti and 45 on other islands in French Polynesia (Coppentrath 1967: 47). One-third of these were market gardeners, one-quarter were workers and about one-fifth merchants—already the beginning of a Huaqiao community. Some would have sent their part-Chinese sons to China for education, and these young men would have returned as Chinese rather than Tahitians. This Hakka community might then have attracted Hakka from California—or even Cantonese who had to speak Hakka once they joined the community in Tahiti.

After Stewart's debacle, it seemed that cotton was dead in the Pacific, but the German New Guinea Company was still hopeful of developing both cotton and tobacco plantations after Germany took over New Guinea as a protectorate in 1884. Indeed, they shared with the German colonial governor Wilhelm Hahl the vision of 'an Asian New Guinea in which tens of thousands of coolies from China and South-East Asia would provide plentiful and experienced plantation labour and, after completing their indenture, would settle permanently in the country on small holdings' (Firth 1989: 180–1). Evidently, his inspiration was Malaya, where the British had permitted large-scale Chinese settlement to advance their colonial economy based on exports of tin, copra and later rubber (Hall 1964: 521–37).¹¹

Thus began another sad and eventually tragic story of mistreated Chinese labour. In 1887 the company began to import Chinese labour from Singapore and Sumatra, with 397 'experienced tobacco coolies' (mainly Chinese) from Central Sumatra in 1891 (Biskup 1970: 86). The fact that most of them were ill or unfit through opium-addiction led some Germans to believe that Dutch tobacco interests in Java had sabotaged the plan, but the harsh treatment they received from the Germans produced a shocking mortality rate among the Chinese, some sources claiming as high as fifty per cent (e.g. Willson, Moore & Munro 1990: 89).¹² Furthermore, they were subject to brutal corporal punishment: five strokes of the rattan cane for the smallest misdemeanour and ten strokes for attempting to escape, which many tried to do despite the unlikelihood of success (Biskup 1970: 91).

As a result of these dreadful conditions, the Straits Settlements government discouraged labour recruitment in Singapore as early as 1891, and when an account of the gruesome flogging of ten Chinese was published in the *Straits Times* in January 1903 (Song 1923: 345)¹³ the Germans abandoned Singapore and turned to Hong Kong and Swatow (Shantou). The Governor of German New Guinea then exempted Chinese from corporal punishment by placing them under the same legal regime as the Europeans, who paid fines for minor offences (Biskup 1970: 97), and the German consul in Swatow made special rules to cover recruitment in that port (Chen 1984: 57). These changes did not solve the problem, however, and in 1906 there were only 38 Chinese labourers in mainland New Guinea (Wu 1982: 19).¹⁴ By that time, a resident Chinese community of traders and tradesmen had emerged.

In the early 1880s, the discovery of valuable metal ores in French New Caledonia (nickel, iron and chrome) created a sudden demand for labour that could not be filled by the convict labour the colony had relied on up to that time. The mining company Société le Nickel contracted 165 Chinese labourers from Macao in 1884, but they soon returned to China and the experiment was not repeated because of 'unhappy results' (Angleviel & Mouilleseaux 1993: 9). I have been unable to discover what this phrase meant or anything more about this brief migration.¹⁵

At the end of the nineteenth century, none of the plantation economies in the various South Pacific colonies was recruiting Chinese indentured labour, with the exception of small numbers to German New Guinea. I find it interesting that most of the Chinese contract labour schemes of the nineteenth century did not lead to settled Chinese communities. Meare's scheme on the west coast of Vancouver Island may have brought the early Cantonese settlers to Hawai'i, but it left no identifiable Chinese community in Canada—that appeared seventy years later, when gold, not furs, was the attraction. Similarly, the Hokkien labourers left no community in Hawai'i, Cantonese traders being the pioneers of that settlement. Exceptions were the Cantonese labourers in Peru and, if I am right, Hakka labourers in Tahiti, both of whom did establish the Chinese communities in those territories, but neither in German New Guinea nor in French New Caledonia did Chinese contract labour pioneer a Chinese settlement. In New Guinea the community developed from the Chinese tradesmen and traders who were already in Rabaul; and in New Caledonia there was no Chinese community until 1957, when many Chinese from Tahiti moved to Nouméa (Willmott 1998: 296).

Early in the twentieth century, three territories in the Pacific began to recruit Chinese contract labour in large numbers: Western Samoa, Nauru and Banaba (Ocean Island in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands).¹⁶ Between 1903 and 1913, nearly four thousand Chinese were contracted to copra plantations in German Samoa (Chen 1984: 65; Newbury 1980a: 21) and the practice continued under New Zealand administration, with another three thousand arriving, until the Pacific War (Munro 1990: xlv). Similarly on Nauru, under both German and Australian administrations, the Pacific Phosphate Company (later, the British Phosphate Commission) recruited over six thousand Chinese contract labourers over the years.¹⁷ Chinese contract labour also worked on Banaba (Ocean Island) until the Pacific War (Willson, Moore & Munro 1990: 92; Williams & Macdonald 1985: 315–6).

Post-independence contracts with Chinese construction companies have brought men from the People's Republic of China to build government buildings in Apia, Western Samoa, university buildings in Port Vila, Vanuatu, a hotel near Nuku'alofa in Tonga and a stadium for the 2003 South Pacific Games in Suva. Nauru also continued to hire Chinese labour on contract after

it achieved independence in 1968, although now almost all are clerks and skilled tradesmen rather than labourers (interviews). Also, hundreds of Chinese women are contracted to Fijian garment factories today (Ali 2002: 96). But these are quite different stories, ones that require research before we can speculate on whether Pember Reeves and Persia Crawford Campbell would have denounced them as 'sinister', 'unattractive' or 'repulsive'.

Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Conference on Quong Tart and His Times held in Sydney, 1–4 July 2004. A related paper on Quong Tart's association with Fiji by Bessie Ng Kumlin Ali (Ali 2004) was read at the same conference.

1 Many of the traders seeking sandalwood in the Pacific Islands at the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries carried Chinese cooks and carpenters, at first recruited in Amoy (Xiamen) and later Canton and Hong Kong. Some also had Chinese blacksmiths to make trading goods such as tomahawks (Willmott 1995: 132). The search for furs after 1784 also brought Europeans to New Zealand in 1792 (about the same time as the whalers arrived), where the fur seal was decimated in two short decades, 1792–1810 (Owens 1981: 31).

2 Thanks to Peggy Kai's research, we know both the Chinese and Hawaiian names of these six 'sugar masters', so we know that they are Cantonese (Kai 1974). All six married Hawaiian women, and the fact that they had Hawaiian names suggests that they settled there. One of them, Akina, was also known as Tang Ahsin, Akin, or Ahkina ('Chinese Merchant-Adventurers' 1974: 8).

3 This also included twenty 'boys' who were recruited as house servants on similar five-year contracts.

4 A few of the Chinese 'free migrants' to Hawai'i in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were Hakka, but the vast majority were Cantonese 'punti' (Kastens 1978: 61).

5 'In 1867 Captain Alfred Tetens established a cotton plantation at Koror in the Palau group on behalf of J.C. Godeffroy und Sohn of Samoa, importing 22 Chinese labourers . . . [who] were repatriated the following year [to Hong Kong]' (Willson, Moore & Munro 1990: 79).

6 Perhaps this was the intended destination of the 550 Chinese workers Chen Hansheng reports to have mutinied on a French ship in 1865 (see n. 8 below).

7 William Stewart was a wine merchant and his brother James a customs official in 1858, when they were caught in a conspiracy to avoid duty on a shipment of wine, spirits and tobacco, whereupon they left hurriedly and separately for Lord Howe Island and disappeared for four years. It is evident from subsequent events that William must have returned to England and persuaded his brother-in-law Augusto Soarès that cotton was the coming investment, for he had £135,000 to buy land when he landed at Papeete. (For brief accounts of his colourful role in the Tahiti cotton industry see Langdon 1979: 185–96; Newbury 1980b: 168–73).

8 Chen Hansheng adds that 550 Chinese workers mutinied on a French ship named 'De-ya de Mei-er' (*Dieu de Mer?*) in 1865 and only 120 arrived alive (Chen 1984: 50). He cites Chinese records for this event but I have found no corroboration elsewhere. Nine deaths, most of which the captain of the vessel attributed to opium deprivation, occurred during the 83-day voyage of the first ship carrying 337 Chinese (Coppénrath 1967: 29; for the number of days, Vognin 1995: 143).

9 When the workers arrived in 1865, there was already a handful of Chinese merchants settled at Papeete (Willmott 1995: 134), all from Manila and therefore probably Hokkien. In nineteenth-century Tahiti we find the opposite of the Hawaiian situation: Hokkien Huashang but not Hokkien Huagong. The growth of Hakka business after the collapse of Atimaono seems to have swamped the Hokkien, as there is no evidence of any Hokkien in Papeete after 1900.

10 When the Chinese built a grand new temple in 1985 to replace the original wooden building that had been dedicated in 1877 and burned down in 1981, an altar to Chim Soo was set up in one corner, where local Chinese burn incense to his memory.

11 Chinese tin-miners arrived on the Malay Peninsula long before the British in the nineteenth century, and the British were able to use their presence as a reason for the sultans to accept British 'protection' (Hall 1964: 521).

12 Biskup reports that of 400 Chinese arriving in September 1891, only eighty remained by May 1892 (Biskup 1970: 91). Firth writes that 'a German naval report claimed that over 60 per cent of the workforce in Kaiser Wilhelmsland [mainland German New Guinea] died in 1891 and 1892' (Firth 1972: 369).

13 Song's account, based on 'two independent correspondents', describes the events at Herbertshohe in German New Guinea: 'some ten coolies were stripped naked and given ten strokes of a stout rattan about an inch thick and four feet long, by order of the Judge, Herr Wolf, without any trial or official inquiry. The flesh was ripped off, and the men howled dolorously. No doctor was present to certify if the men could bear flogging or not. They had refused to work on Sunday, and it was stated that their contracts exempted them from Sunday labour' (1923: 345).

14 Chen Hansheng reports that altogether 3,500 Chinese went to work in German New Guinea between 1900 and 1914 (Chen 1984: 57) but most sources indicate that indentured labour was down to a trickle by 1903. According to Chen, the Chinese government moved to end German labour recruitment in Swatow in 1908 on the grounds that the contracts for a hundred workers included a clause tying the workers to fraudulent loans (*ibid.*, cf. Willson, Moore & Munro 1990: 92).

15 Chen Hansheng states that 450 Chinese were brought to New Caledonia from Leizhou in 1902 (Chen 1984: 52) but I have found no corroboration of this statement, nor does Chen provide any reference for it. I suspect that the Chinese he is referring to were Vietnamese, as French writers at that time often referred to people from French Indochina as 'Chinois'.

16 Some Chinese may have been contracted in the first decade of the twentieth century to work for the German phosphate company on Angaur in the Caroline Islands, but objections to German brutality against Chinese workers in Samoa caused the Guangdong government to ban further recruitment in 1908 (Willson, Moore & Munro 1990: 92; cf. Chen 1984: 57). Before 1930 some Chinese labour was also contracted to Makatea in French Polynesia by the *Compagnie Française des Phosphates de l'Océanie*, although most of its labourers were Japanese and Vietnamese (Newbury 1972: 185–6).

17 Figures in Chen Hansheng add up to about 6,100 Chinese recruits between 1907 and 1924 (Chen 1984: 59–61).

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