

A. INTRODUCTORY

WESTERN SAMOA is situated between 13 and 15 degrees south of the Equator and between the 171st and 173rd degrees of west longitude. The Territory comprises the islands of Upolu (45 miles long) and Savai'i (46 miles), together with seven other small islands and islets closely adjacent.

The total area of the Territory is 1,133 square miles, Savai'i being approximately 700 square miles in extent and Upolu about 430 square miles.

The islands have a tropical climate, with heavy precipitation and occasional severe storms. They are of volcanic formation, with rugged and mountainous terrain rising to an elevation of 3,608 ft. in Upolu and 6,094 ft. in Savai'i. Coral reefs fringe much of the coast-line. Volcanic eruptions have covered sections of the islands with lava flows, especially in Savai'i, where volcanic activity has occurred as recently as 1906. Though the islands are heavily forested, soils are generally thin and rocky, and cultivation to date has been limited almost wholly to the coastal area and to the adjacent lower slopes.

Apia, the only town in the Territory, is situated on the north coast of Upolu and, together with immediately adjoining villages, has a population of approximately 10,000. It contains the administrative headquarters and is also the only port of call for the Territory. Most Samoans live on the coasts, 11 villages only out of a total of 192 being situated inland.

Savai'i, although larger than Upolu, supports only about one-third the population of the sister island; this is due to the comparatively recent volcanic activity referred to above, which has covered large areas of Savai'i with barren lava fields.

The ethnic composition of the Native population as disclosed by the 1945 census showed that over 99 per cent. comprised full Samoans, while the balance was made up of small numbers of people from the surrounding Pacific islands.

The Samoans are a branch of the Polynesian race and speak a dialect of the Polynesian language. They have long been converted to Christianity, and the religious affiliations indicated by the 1945 census were—

	Per Cent.		Per Cent.
London Missionary Society	.. 58·7	Latter Day Saints (Mormon)	.. 3·7
Roman Catholic Mission	.. 18·9	Samoan Congregational Church	0·9
Methodist Mission	.. 17·0	Seventh Day Adventist Mission	0·8

The Church is an important social as well as spiritual centre in Samoan communities.

The unit of social organization is the family (aiga), which may be divided into groups or branches, at the head of each of which is the matai. A Samoan title is the family name to which a matai succeeds on assuming his position of leadership of the family group. Succession is not necessarily hereditary; it may even be bestowed on a stranger as a reward for good service to the family or to the preceding holder. A matai receives service from the members of the family, whom he controls in patriarchal style, conferring with them on matters of importance. Each matai has a seat on the council, or fono, which directs village affairs.

All tropical foods grow abundantly, and the economic resources of the Territory are confined to agricultural and marine products, together with limited but useful forest resources. No minerals of commercial value are known to exist.

In the nineteenth century, under the stimulus of European political contacts, a Samoan "kingdom" took form, with a Samoan "King." The "Kingship" was held by a non-hereditary succession of chiefs, representative of the highest families in Samoa, but the rivalries engendered kept the islands in almost continuous civil strife. The "kingdom" persisted, however, until 1899. Certain privileges were obtained from the "independent" Samoan Government by Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, including the right to establish coaling-stations.