

A. INTRODUCTORY

THE Territory of Western Samoa lies between latitude 13° and 15° south and longitude 171° and 173° west. It comprises the two large islands of Savai'i and Upolu, the small islands of Manono and Apolima, and several islets lying off the coasts. The total land area is about 1,130 square miles, of which 700 square miles is in Savai'i and between 420 and 430 square miles in Upolu. The islands are formed mainly of volcanic rocks, with coral reefs surrounding much of their coasts. Rugged mountain-ranges form the core of both main islands and rise to 3,608 ft. in Upolu and 6,094 ft. in Savai'i. Samoa is still an area of active vulcanism, and in Savai'i large areas of previously cultivated land were covered by lava during the most recent period of activity of the volcano Matavanu between 1905 and 1911.

The climate of Samoa is tropical, with heavy precipitation and occasional severe storms. The wettest months are from December to March, when the dominance of the south-east trade winds is interrupted by northerlies and westerlies. But the rainfall throughout the remainder of the year is considerable. Similarly, the difference in mean temperatures between the hottest and the coolest months is only a few degrees.

The steady heat and plentiful rain enable the islands to support a dense tropical rain-forest, despite the thin and rocky character of much of the soil. A large proportion of the land is believed, however, to be unfit for clearance and cultivation, and, in fact, both Samoan and European cultivation has been restricted very largely to the coastal zones and adjacent foothills.

The large area laid waste by lava-flows in Savai'i is a primary cause of that island's supporting only between a quarter and a third of the population of the Territory, despite its greater size than Upolu. At the time of the last census, in 1945, the figures (for Samoans only) were: Upolu, 43,768; Savai'i, 18,654. At 31st March, 1949, the total population was estimated at 75,381. Of this total, 69,426 were Samoans, 5,406 were persons of part-Samoan blood possessing European status, and 297 were full Europeans (mainly New Zealanders connected with the Public Service, commercial organizations, or the missionary societies).

The indigenous population of Western Samoa is Polynesian and they are numerically the largest branch of the Polynesian race after the New Zealand Maori. Though admixture has taken place, there is still a very high proportion of full-blooded Samoans. The speech of the Samoan is a Polynesian dialect and some sounds occurring in other Polynesian dialects are absent or replaced by a glottal stop. The standard reference work on the language is Pratts "Grammar and Dictionary" (published by the London Missionary Society, Samoa, 1862).

The Samoans have long been converted to Christianity, and their religious affiliations as indicated by the census of 1945 were:—

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

The pattern of settlement is a relatively simple one. The great majority of Samoans live in villages, and these, with very few exceptions, are situated on the coast or on rivers with easy access to the sea. The only town is Apia, the political capital and commercial centre of the Territory, situated on the north coast of Upolu. The town stretches along the shores of Apia Harbour, encircling what were formerly several separate Samoan villages. Apia, with immediately adjacent villages, has a population of about 10,000. The great majority of persons of European status live in or about Apia.