

42. HISTORY

Niue was discovered by Captain Cook in 1774 and named Savage Island on account of the inhospitable reception received from the Natives. The island came under the general jurisdiction of the British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific and was subsequently annexed by New Zealand in 1901 as part of the Cook Islands.

The Christian gospel was first brought to Niue in 1846 by a Niuean returning from Samoa, and followed in 1849 by a Samoan teacher trained by the London Missionary Society. By the time the society's first European missionary arrived in 1861, practically all the people were Christians.

43. PEOPLE

The people are of Polynesian stock, speaking a dialect of the tongue common to the race in other parts of the South Pacific. The comparative isolation of the island has not been conducive to intermarriage with Europeans, so that the proportion of half-castes is very small. In spite of the fact that there have been no wars or civil disturbances for the past century, the population has remained more or less static, with a gradual increase in recent years. The limited natural resources of the island and the earlier extensive use of Niueans as indentured labour in other Pacific groups have been contributing factors. The traditional form of government is patriarchal, the ruling heads of clans, "patus" having authority in their own villages. In earlier times the "patus" met in conclave under their appointed King to control affairs relating to the island as a whole. The King-ship was restored in 1876 until the end of the century for the purpose of administering a written code of laws, but has lapsed with the establishment of the present form of administration. The former pagan heritage of the people has been completely replaced by the church of the London Missionary Society, which is now their sole social organization. The society early established mission schools and chapels which, until the recent prosecution of a more vigorous secular education system, provided the core of the island culture. The Niuean is perhaps of a slightly lower cultural standard than other Polynesian groups, but is moderately industrious under the stimulus of economic necessity and is of a peaceful and quiet disposition. The women are deft weavers of hats, baskets, and similar native ware, which from time to time have been a staple export of the island.

44. POPULATION

The last official census, taken in 1945, disclosed that the community comprised 2,041 male and 2,189 female Natives, plus 13 male and 10 female Europeans, a total of 4,253 all told. Vital statistics for the year ended 31st March, 1948, are summarized as follows:—

Estimated Population at 31st March, 1948

—		Males.	Females.	Total.
Europeans	..	19	10	29
Natives	..	2,050	2,239	4,289
Totals	..	2,069	2,249	4,318

Births and Deaths

Births	..	..	..	..	166
Deaths	..	..	..	..	110
Births per 1,000 of population	..	..	..	..	38.37
Deaths per 1,000 of population	..	..	..	..	25.43
Infant mortality per 1,000 births	..	..	..	..	253

The excess of births over deaths is notable when compared with the figures for recent years. The infant-mortality rate, however, shows a marked increase when compared with last year, due to the epidemics of broncho-pneumonia and whooping-cough.