

4. POPULATION

The following are the figures from the last census taken in September, 1945 :—

—			Males.	Females.	Samoaans.	Total.
Fakaofu	..	..	268	297	5	570
Nukunono	..	..	195	169	3	367
Atafu	..	..	202	242	7	451
Total .. ..			..	..	..	1,388
Less Samoaans			..	..	..	15
Tokelau Islanders			..	..	..	1,373

The clerk on each island keeps a roll in which are included those absent on other islands, and as the last census figures show that 153 Tokelau Islanders were absent in Samoa, mostly to attend the London Missionary Society and Catholic schools and, to a lesser degree, to seek employment, the total number of this small branch of the Polynesian people in 1945 was 1,526. Births and deaths since the date of the census bring the total as at 31st March, 1948, to 1,594. A count of the Islanders in December, 1947, showed 1,416 living in the Group at that time.

Although it is not possible to prepare a full account of the raids of South Americans, principally from Peru, who, during a period of some twenty years, organized raids for labour purposes upon this small Group, it appears from the reports of early Missionaries that the population was much reduced by these depredations which took place apparently between about 1850 and 1870. Both Nukunono and Fakaofu suffered a great deal from the visits of these slavers, who enticed the natives aboard their vessels by a display of trinkets, beads, looking-glasses, and other things attractive to an unsophisticated people. The Rev. Newall, in a series of notes on the Tokelau, Ellice, and Gilbert Islanders, relates that some 247 people were taken from Fakaofu in 1863, and it was probably at about this time that Nukunono suffered its most severe raid, when only 80 of the inhabitants were left. Just before the arrival of a Mission ship in 1868 the Peruvians had taken 116 men from Fakaofu and 30 from Atafu.

As the population is now increasing steadily, and in view of the fact that because of the prevailing wind being from the south-east the people habitually live on the lee side of each atoll, leaving the remaining areas for plantation purposes, in at least one case, that of Fakaofu, the living islet is now becoming seriously overcrowded, and at some time in the not far distant future it may be necessary to settle some at least of the population of this atoll on other suitable islets. The people, however, cling tenaciously to their traditional mode of living together on one islet, which, it appears, was based originally upon the need to assemble all available forces closely together for the purposes of self-protection. There are many traditions and historical records which tell of attacks by one atoll of this Group upon another.

5. CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

There was no contact with the Group by missionaries until about the middle of the last century, many years after their first discovery. In their indigenous state the Islands were governed by a chief, who appeared to combine the offices both of king and high priest.

In 1846, after a hurricane that devastated Fakaofu, many of the Natives set out in canoes, presumably to go to Nukunono. Storms dispersed the canoes, and it seems that only two survived, landing eventually at Wallis Island, to the west of Savai'i in Samoa.