

The climate in the Lower Group, apart from the summer months, is mild and equable. The average temperature in Rarotonga for the last thirty-eight years is 74·67 degrees, and the average rainfall for the same period 82·3 in. In the Lower Group the water-supply is adequate and there is little danger of serious droughts; in the Northern Group, however, the problem of water-supply is acute and droughts of varying intensity are experienced after a relatively short dry period. The problem is not one of supply, since the rainfall is adequate, but one of collection and storage. The Administration is attempting to improve the position by the provision of further water-tanks and catchment areas.

B. HISTORY

Some of the islands of the Lower Group were discovered in 1773 by Captain Cook, who first touched at Manuae. There are no European records of Rarotonga, Mauke, and Mitiaro until 1823, when the Rev. John Williams, of the London Missionary Society, visited them. The Cook Islands became a British Protectorate in 1888, and in 1901 were annexed to the British Empire and proclaimed part of New Zealand.

C. PEOPLE

The Cook Island Maori is a Polynesian and is closely allied to the New Zealand Maori. There is a strong resemblance between these people in tradition, language, and custom. Many of the tribes in both places are able to trace their descent back to a common ancestor. The language shows only slight differences from New Zealand Maori. A census of the area is held in conjunction with the New Zealand census, and the following figures are quoted to illustrate the population growth:—

1906	..	..	..	..	8,518
1926	..	..	..	..	10,081
1945	..	..	..	..	14,519*

*Includes 231 Europeans.

It should be emphasized that these figures refer only to resident population and do not take into account those who migrate to New Zealand.

The Maoris are all professed Christians. The London Missionary Society, the Roman Catholic Mission, the Seventh Day Adventist Mission, and the Church of Latter Day Saints are represented in the Group. Maori is still the spoken language of the area, and official publications are published in both English and Maori. The Census of 1945 revealed that fewer than 6 per cent. of the population over ten years of age were unable to read and write Maori.

D. GOVERNMENT

The Cook Islands are within the boundaries of the Dominion of New Zealand and provision for their government is made in the Cook Islands Act, 1915. Under this Act a Resident Commissioner is charged with the administration of the Cook Islands. The Resident Commissioner is resident in Rarotonga, and is represented on the other islands by Resident Agents. The Maoris are British subjects and the provisions of the British Nationality and New Zealand Citizenship Act, 1948, apply.

In each of the ten main islands there are Island Councils consisting of *ex-officio* and elected members, who are elected triennially. The *ex-officio* members comprise the Resident Commissioner, Resident Agents, at the outer islands, together with the Arikis or leading chiefs at the islands. The franchise extends to all Maoris over eighteen years of age. The Councils are presided over by the Resident Commissioner or the Resident Agents. Europeans in the Cook Group are represented by one elected member of the Island Council of Rarotonga.