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CENSUS OF THE MAORI POPULATION

(PAPERS RELATING TO).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

MEMORANDUM for the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

I have the honour to lay before you the preliminary results of the census of the Native population, which was taken during the month of April last. It is not possible to take the Maori census in one night, as is done in the case of the European census, nor is the same degree of accuracy to be expected in the enumeration; but I believe the work has been done as thoroughly as circumstances would permit. The total Maori population amounted to 47,731 persons, an increase for the five years of 4,588 persons, but these figures are liable to readjustment, being only the first rough results taken from the Enumerators' summaries.

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The first Native census was taken in the year 1874, but in 1867, and again in 1871, the various officers residing in Native districts had been instructed to furnish estimates of the number of Maoris in their respective districts. These estimates were, however, admittedly merely approximate, and must be regarded as imperfect. Since 1874 a census of the Native population has been taken coincidently with the European census. The following table shows the population at these respective periods:—

Persons. Increase. Decrease.

				rersons.	Increase.	Decrease
1867	(approximate	estimate)	 	 38,540		• • • •
1871	,,	ŕ	 	 37,502	• • •	
1874	(first census)		 	 45,470		
1878			 	 43,595		1,875
1881			 	 44,097	502	• • • •
1886	* * *		 	 41,969		2,128
1891	,		 	 41,993	24	• • •
1896			 	 39,854		2,139
1901		***	 	 43,143	3,289	
1906			 	 47,731	4,588	

The fluctuations exhibited in the above table cannot be regarded as normal, and conclusions deduced from the figures must be regarded to a large degree as conjectural. It was doubted whether the large decrease shown by the census of 1896 was a real decrease, or merely due to the non-inclusion of a number of Natives either by accident or through refusals to give proper information to the sub-enumerators. Similarly the large increase shown by the present census may in part be attributed to more favourable circumstances permitting a closer enumeration to be made on this occasion.

It is obvious that any real increase in the Maori population must arise from an excess of births over deaths—in other words, the Maoris must reproduce themselves, as, unlike the European population, they cannot be recruited from outside. It is therefore necessary to ascertain whether there is any increase in the number of children since the previous census. The comparative Table A attached hereto shows the number of persons under the age of fifteen at the present census to be 18,417, while in 1901 it was 16,082, an increase of 2,395 persons during the five years. Detailed tables showing the ages at classified periods will be published later on.

It is a matter of some difficulty to ascertain the number of half-castes living as Maoris. There is no very defined rule to guide the Enumerators and sub-enumerators in deciding what half-castes should be classified as "living as Europeans" and "living as Maoris" respectively. This applies especially to the South Island. Probably it would be not very inaccurate to say that all half-castes, and, indeed, a large proportion of the Maoris as well in the South Island, live now in European fashion. They mostly have separate holdings and separate homes, although the areas they hold and cultivate are much smaller than are usually owned by Europeans. It might be a more accurate way of getting an idea of the true condition of the Maori and half-caste population of the South Island if in the next census all half-castes, whether living as Maoris or as Europeans, were numbered in one class by themselves. To quote from the report of Mr. H. W. Bishop, S.M., the