

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN INDEPENDENT SAMOA – TALA ELI OF LAUPULE MOUND AND BEYOND

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Abstract: *In the Independent State of Samoa (Malo Sa'oloto Tuto'atasi o Samoa), there are a few examples of large prehistoric mounds. The oral traditions have indicated that these functioned mainly as pigeon mounds (tia seu lupe). However, surveys and archaeological investigations have shown that there are various types of mounds and that at least the two largest mounds, Pulemelei and Laupule probably served as house platforms connected to chiefly power and ritual activities. This paper discusses Laupele mound and recent excavations there and touches on inter- and intra-site relationships of large mounds in Samoa and beyond and their prehistoric as well as present contexts.*

INTRODUCTION – AN “INVISIBLE” GIANT PREHISTORIC MOUND IN THE CAPITAL OF APIA

This paper centres on the presentation and analysis of the Laupule mound excavation and the mound building tradition in the Independent State of Samoa (*Malo Sa'oloto Tuto'atasi o Samoa*) (hereafter referred to as Samoa which includes the two large islands Upolu and Savai'i with adjacent islets Manono, Apolima and Nu'uolopa. Tutuila and the Manu'a islands are referred to as American Samoa (Figure 1). However, it has to be remembered that this division is a modern one. The intention is to analyse the relationship between prehistoric mounds and their cognitive and natural environment to understand something about past Samoan society. The contemporary meaning and use of such sites are also discussed.

As a pioneer teacher in Archaeology at the National University of Samoa since 2006, I have made several excursions with students to the large scale prehistoric mound called Laupule. This monumental rectangular mound made up of soil mainly, is more than 100 m wide at the base and 12 m high. It is situated next to *Fagali'i* Airport in the

Samoan capital Apia, one and a half km to the East of the National University of Samoa (*Le Iunivesite Aoao o Samoa*) (Figure 2, 4). Today the mound is not readily visible since it is hidden in a palm grove but during the time when this area operated as a copra plantation, the mound was clearly visible (Figures 3-4).

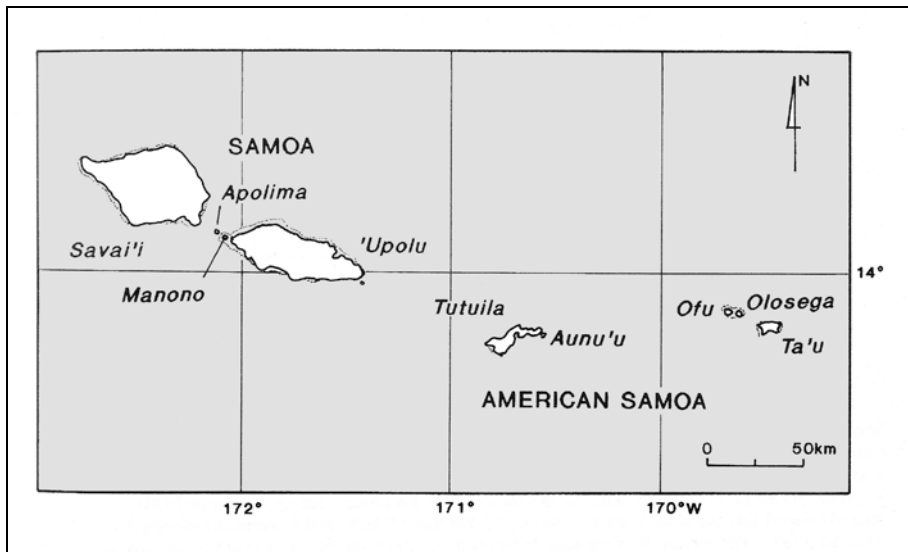


Figure 1. Map of Independent and American Samoa.

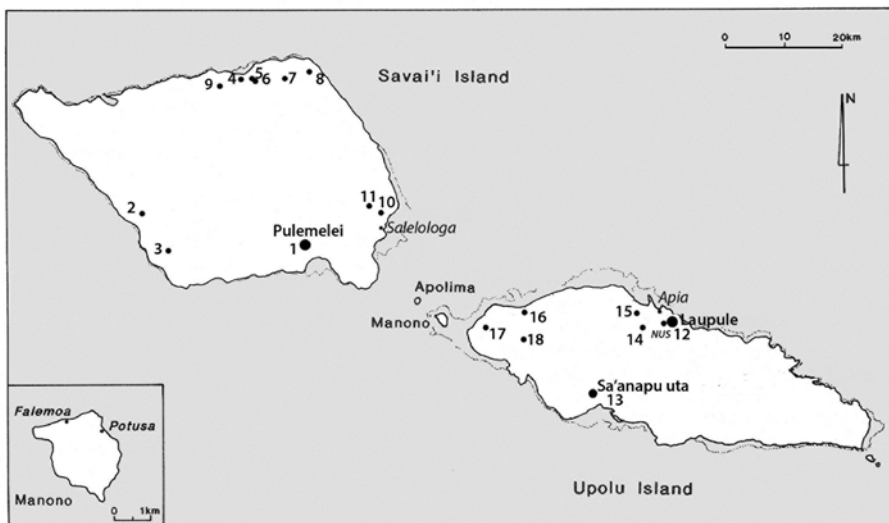


Figure 2. Map of Independent Samoa with sites in text. See Table 1 for site no. NUS= The National University of Samoa.

Table 1. Reported large mounds (over 30x30 meter in size) in Savai'i and Upolu.

Site no	Name (place name/survey name/district or village)	Ref.
1	Pulemelei mound /SS-Le-1 /Palauli/Letolo plantation	Martinsson-Wallin 2007
2	SS-Fa-3/Sagone/Fagasavai'i	Buist 1969: 55
3	SS-La-1/Lata/Lata-i-uta plantation	Buist 1969: 56
4	SS-Fg-1/Ologogo/Faletangaloa	Buist 1969: 55
5	SS-Fg-3/Ologogo/Faletangaloa	Buist 1969: 55
6	SS-Fg-3/Ologogo/Faletangaloa	Buist 1969: 55
7	SS-Pi-1/Ologogo/Paia	Buist 1969: 56
8	SS-Sf-1/Fagasmalo/Safai	Buist 1969: 56
9	SS-Sn-3/Ologogo/Sasina	Buist 1969: 56
10	SS-Sp-5/Tuasivi/Sapapali'i	Buist 1969: 57
11	SS-Sp-16/Tuasivi/Tuaula	Buist 1969: 57
12	Laupule and Tapuitea mounds SU-Va-61-63, 68, 88-91/Vailele	Green 1969
13	Sa'anapu-uta	Epling and Kirk 1972
14	Bishops mound/SU-Mo-1/Moamoa	Hougaard 1969: 254-257
15	Vaiuso-uta road cutting	Martinsson-Wallin 2010
16	Leulumoenga	Davidson 1974:225-227
17	Mulifanua plantation	Davidson 1974: 225-227
18	Manumalala	Davidson 1974: 225-227

During the colonial era this area was a German owned plantation *Deutsche Handels-und Plantagen-Gesellschaft zu Hamburg* and since independence in 1962 it was operated by the state through the Western Samoa Trust Estate Cooperation (WSTEC). The Copra plantation activities ceased in the 1970-80s and the area has now been subdivided

for housing. The existence of this large manmade mound from the past is not generally known among contemporary Samoans. The informant who took me to the place the first time in 2005 referred to it as; - “the hill in the plantation I used to ride up and down when I was a child”. When the students see it for the first time they are usually amazed and every time the same question arises; - “How did you know about this mound?”. The apparently obliviousness of Samoans to the site and my interest (as a western trained scholar of Archaeology) in it as an important prehistoric monument has multi-layered implications for the current relationship of monuments and people in the Pacific, especially in relationship to Archaeological sites.



Figure 3. Photo of Laupule mound in 1965 (photo: courtesy of William Dickenson).

Currently, the son (*Afioga Faamausili Papaalii Moli Malietoa*) of the former Head of State (*Malietoa Tanumafili II*) lives on top of Laupule mound, which today is hidden away in a grove at Fagali'i (Figure 4). If this mound was located in the centre of another capital in the world it is likely that it would be a prominent archaeological visitor site and that the current settlement on top of the mound might be called into question.



Figure 4. Current location of Lauple mound in a grove at the SW corner of Fagali'i airport (photo: Helene Martinsson-Wallin).

Since there is published information about the mound and its physical form is rather intact, I have come to contemplate why there is a lack of general knowledge about the site among contemporary Samoans and why, when it is known, it is regarded as a natural hill. Buist who made a survey of archaeological sites in Savai'i in 1966-67 writes the following;

For most Samoans there is only one time – the immediate present. Apart from stories and legends of the past, of which a majority of the people seem to have some knowledge, there is no sense of history. Abandoned villages on plantations to which wide disused roads lead, may have no names or history of occupation; concentrations of house platforms in heavy bush are not known or recognised as villages of the past; adzes and large flakes or broken adzes lie around rock platforms of present day houses, unrecognised as *to'i ma'a* (stone adzes); features obviously of recent origin are said to be very old. This is no criticism of Samoans, but an introductory explanation to the difficulties of the interpretation of the field evidences (Buist 1969: 35).

It is more than 40 years since Buist made his observations and what he is describing is a 'memory society/milieu' or using the terminology of Pierre Norá "milieu du mémoire" (1989). The obviation and/or

insignificance of past material culture and the importance of oral traditions are still apparent today, even though Samoa has since ratified the World Heritage convention in 2001 and the discipline of Archaeology was launched at the National University of Samoa in 2006.

My knowledge about the site derives from several articles on the mound; the first account accompanied by mapping was carried out by Thomson in 1920s (Thomson 1927). The anthropologist Derek Freeman also visited the mound in the 1940s and published an account (Freeman 1944). A subsequent survey was carried out by Roger Green in the early 1960s (Green 1969: 99-107). Green indicated that the mound was part of a larger settlement in the past with some other large scale mounds in the vicinity and that these large mounds were tied to an oral tradition (Freeman 1944; Green 1969). Green's research was based on oral accounts and field survey but further archaeological research can provide in-depth answers to questions such as: the temporal status of the mound; the initial meaning and function of this place; and what monumental mound building signalled in relation to social structure and internal and external relationships in prehistoric Samoan society. With the intention of answering some of these questions and providing training for archaeology students we carried out archaeological excavation as a field school from The National University of Samoa (NUS), Centre of Samoan Studies (CSS) during some weeks in 2010.

LARGE MOUNDS IN INDEPENDENT SAMOA AND BEYOND

The research focus on the visible built environment, especially large scale sites of durable materials such as stone and earthworks, is a long standing tradition in Archaeology. Several theoretical approaches have centred on these types of grand physical expressions in relation to explaining social organisation and migration patterns (Renfrew 1974; Bradley 1998; DeMarris et al. 1996 etc.). Theoretical approaches to Pacific monuments and their relationship to social organisation have been investigated by Kolb (1994) and Clark and Martinsson-Wallin (2007).

As an archaeologist who enquires into the *long durée* of monuments in Polynesia (Martinsson-Wallin 2000, 2002, 2004, 2011a, b), my research questions about the Samoan mound(s) are several. I take a contextual or holistic approach to chronology and the past human socio-cultural relationship to the natural environment, as well as exploring

why prehistoric material culture, especially of this impressive magnitude, is not known or considered valuable in contemporary Samoa. When investigating these sites I use the *milieu* concept (e.g. *mi*=mid *lieu*=place), a French word for environment which incorporates both natural and socio-cultural aspects. My research interest in the mound building tradition in Samoa began on account of research on ancient large stone monuments in a global perspective but specifically on monumental ceremonial sites in East Polynesia, especially Rapa Nui (Martinsson-Wallin 1994, 1998, 2000; Martinsson-Wallin and Wallin 1999; Anderson et al. 2002; Wallin and Martinsson-Wallin 2008; Wallin et al 2010; Martinsson-Wallin et al. 2013). To be further informed on Polynesian ceremonial sites and the relationship of East Polynesian monuments to the mound building tradition of West Polynesia, we made a case study and archaeological excavations at the large Pulemelei mound in Savai'i in 2002-2004 (Martinsson-Wallin 2007). We had several research questions related to the mound including its temporal status and use and re-use. An important part was also devoted to training students and locals in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Management (CHM), with the aim to benefit the local community. In the wake of the archaeological investigations I was invited to the National University of Samoa (NUS) to aid in the development of university courses in Archaeology and CHM. These actions have been sponsored partly by a so called Linnaeus-Palme exchange (2005-2013) supported from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). In 2012 Archaeology became a major at NUS due to the actions of Associate Professor Penelope Schoffel and Lecturer Tautala Asaua Pesa at the Centre for Samoan Studies. To popularise and enhance understanding of the discipline, the Vice Chancellor Professor Asofou So'o at NUS, invented a Samoan word for Archaeology - *Tala eli* - which literally means "stories from the soil".

The archaeological investigation of Pulemelei mound and surrounding large scale prehistoric settlements (Martinsson-Wallin 2007), paired with data on smaller mounds from Janet Davidson's and Roger Green's excavations in the 1960s (Davidson 1974: 225-226), shed general and specific light on the dating and structure of mound building in Samoa. Only a few large scale prehistoric square or rectangular mounds are to be found today in the Samoan landscape. The largest ones being: Pulemelei stone mound in Savai'i, situated in the extensive

prehistoric abandoned settlement at Letolo plantation in the Palauli district; the Laupule and Tapuitea mounds at Fagali'i in Apia, Upolu; and the Sa'anapu mound in Sa'anapu-uta on the south side of Upolu (Figure 1). A few other rather large but not so high mounds of soil and stones have been reported in Upolu at Mulifanua plantation, Leulumoega, Moamoa, Tanumalala and Vailele (Hougaard 1969; Davidson 1974: 225-227. In Savai'i Buist (1969) report eleven large mounds with dimensions of 100 feet (c. 30,5m) or more which are distributed in, Ologogo district (at Sasina, Paia, Faletagaloa villages), Sagone district (at Fagasavai'i village), Lata district (at Lata-i-uta plantation), Fagamalo district (at Safai village), and Tuasivi district (at Sapapali'i and Tuaula villages)(Figure 2 and Table 1).

Janet Davidson discusses this mound building tradition and concludes that there are few very large mounds and that it is arbitrary what could be claimed as mounds and platforms and that many mounds have superimposed structures and a complex construction history (Davidson 1974: 25-26). Buist, who made a field survey of archaeological sites in Savai'i, made a division of small and large mounds and stated that the latter being 100-200 ft (c. 30.5-61 meter), c. 1860m² at the base and rise 8-10 ft (2.4-3 meters) with sloping sides, c. 3720m³ (Buist 1969: 39). According to Buist (1969: 55-57) there were eleven securely measured such mounds found during the survey in Savai'i (Figure 2, Table 1). Subsequent research by Jennings et al. (1982) defined "large mounds" as having basal area of 750-1000 m², while Asaua (2005: 45) defines "large" as >1300m² and 4500m³. Pulemelei stone mound is estimated to be 17000 m³ and Laupule earth mound 45000 m³, and in comparison to other mounds they stand out.

From a structural point of view two types of mounds are the most prevalent in Samoa and in the West Polynesia area; one with an irregular shape and protruding arms which were probably used as pigeon snaring mounds (*tia seu lupe*). Such mounds are found both in Independent and American Samoa (Herdrich 1991; Martinsson-Wallin and Wehlin 2007). Tonga has similar mounds for the same purpose (*sia heu lupe*) but they are generally rounded stone heaps with flat tops and a circular central pit (Burley 1996). One of the larger known star mounds is found on the highest hilltop in Manono, which currently is mapped and investigated (Sand 2013). The other type of mound is of a rectangular or squared truncated shape with sloping sides built of stone

and/or soil. This type is probably related to chiefly houses/ritual/burial sites in Independent Samoa and such large structures have not been reported in American Samoa. In Tonga it is clear that the stepped *langi* mounds/platforms, bordered with cut limestone slabs, house chiefly burials (Clark et al. 2008 and see Clark this volume). Lower rectangular mounds found in Tonga, often with backrests, are so-called *esi* mounds, which probably functioned as sitting mounds for chiefs (McKern 1929; Clark and Martinsson-Wallin 2007: 37 and see Clark this volume). A few larger scale mounds are also found in Niue (Anderson and Walters 2002), Rotuma (Ladefoged 1992), Wallis (Uvea) (Sand 1998) and Futuna and they are tied to chiefly power.

The Pulemelei investigation showed that this truncated stone mound was initially built around AD 1100-1300 as a c. 60x50 m and 3 m high platform, and that it was built on top of earlier settlement with activities dating back at least 2000 years in time (Martinsson-Wallin et al. 2007: 57). It is part of an extensive settlement in the Palauli area on the south side of Savai'i (Figure 5).



Figure 5. East side of Pulemelei mound during the clearing and excavation of the surroundings in 2003 (photo: Helene Martinsson-Wallin).

The mound is situated uphill c. 1,5 km inland in a high position and faces a passage in the reef. When standing on the top of the mound it is possible to have an overview of Apolima, Manono and Upolu. This can

be interpreted as indicating that the person or persons who had control over the mound also had control over who approached Palauli from the sea and other islands. When the mound was cleared the approach from the east required walking on one of the two main roads/paths (*fuiala*) in the large settlement extending from the river crossing close to the sea to the interior. When approaching from the south, the stone masses of the mound are imposing and overwhelming. On the other hand just to the north, uphill from the mound is a two meter high and c. 20x 20 meter large platform from where one has a clear view of activities on the top of the mound and there is a raised pathway connecting the large mound with this platform. A large *umu ti* is adjacent to this smaller platform (Martinsson-Wallin et al. 2007: 47-48).

The *langi* tradition of Tonga is also likely to date back to around the 12th century and thus falls in the same time frame as the construction of the earliest stage of Pulemelei (Clark et al. 2008). The relationship between these traditions is not clear but interactions of various kinds in the West Polynesian area between Tonga, Samoa and Fiji are indicated both in oral traditions and in the material culture (Clark and Martinsson-Wallin 2007: 36). In the investigation of Pulemelei mound we ascertained that it had been outlined with larger slabs set on edge similar to the Tongan *langi* building tradition. A *litofaga* (a re-location of the bones ceremony) was carried out prior to the large scale excavations of Pulemelei site in 2003 (Tamasese 2007) but it has still not been established if this structure houses graves like the Tongan *langi* structures. A georadar investigation of Pulemelei has, however, ruled out that there are hollows for burials in the centre of the mound, but at the bottom there is indication of a small mound but no vault as such (Clark and de Biran 2007: 65).

Within the boundaries of Letolo plantation located in the southern part of Savai'i, where Pulemelei mound is situated, a survey of archaeological features was conducted in 1977-78 by peace-corps volunteer Gregory Jackmond (n.d. Auckland University). Besides the large mound this survey revealed remains of an extensive prehistoric abandoned settlement with a multitude of stone platforms/mounds of various sizes which probably constituted house platforms and other features, such as raised rim ovens, walls, fences and paved pathways etc. Survey work of prehistoric remains has also been carried out by Jennings and associates at the plantation site at Sapapali'i in Savai'i and

at Mount Olo in Upolu (Jennings et al. 1976; Jennings and Holmer 1980). The results of these surveys, paired with excavation data by Green and Davidson (1974) at Falefa'a valley, has been analysed concerning the settlement pattern by Jennings et al. (1982) and subsequently discussed by Green (2002). Jennings and Holmer (ibid) suggested that the pre-European settlement pattern was similar to the contemporary one and consisted of household units (HHU) for the extended family with several square house platforms delimited by fences and walkways. A number of such HHU made up a village ward (*pito nu'u*) and several of these wards made up the village (*nu'u*) centring around a community house *fale tele* situated on a rounded/oval platform and an open community ground *malae* within the village (*nu'u*) (Holmer 1980: 93; Jennings and Holmer 1980). Green (2002) is of the opinion that the underlying structure of this settlement pattern is tied to the development of Ancestral Polynesian Society (APS), which is considered to have developed in Samoa and Tonga. Further investigations are needed to ascertain if there has been an unchanged settlement pattern during the past 3000 years in this area. Further investigations of the Palauli settlement area(s) could provide detailed information on this issue. Another large scale element of the built environment in the form of a large star mound situated on a hilltop has been re-exposed by recent survey on the island of Manono and it appears that this is part of a fortification site (Sand et al. 2013). Other sites with modifications of hilltops and the erections of walls have also been interpreted as fortification sites, as for example in Luatuanu'u (Davidson 1969: 185-200). Star mounds have been indicated to be a type of site that developed during the last 300-500 years or so (Martinsson-Wallin and Wehlin 2007).

Prior to the Laupule investigation there was really only the Pulemelei investigations that had been carried out at large mounds in Samoa. That is why we considered it essential to make further case studies to retrieve archaeological data to draw in-depth conclusions on when and why large scale mounds were built and if this activity could be placed in relation to the rise of a stratified society as indicated by the coming together of four important titles to form the *Tafa'ifa* held by one person. This is the background for the investigations at the Laupule mound which was carried out as a field school for students attending the archaeological program at NUS during a couple of weeks in December 2010. Another aim of the investigation was to create awareness of the

great cultural significance of this ancient sites and the need for protection and management of the few relatively intact large and visible archaeological sites that currently can be found in Samoa. There are great possibilities to transform these places into important visitor sites and bring to light the cultural significance of these monuments, to broaden and reinforce the cultural tourism of the State and various local communities, alike.

RESEARCH HISTORY OF LAUPULE MOUND:

Andrew Thomson and Derek Freeman visited the mound in the 1920s and 1940s respectively. These scholars measured the mound and collected oral accounts which related to the mound and the immediate area. Laupule mound was described as a large truncated pyramid of earth situated at Fagali'i, Vailele by Andrew Thomson in 1927. He writes that;

About four miles northeast of Apia in Vailele plantation is an imposing but only slightly known earthwork referred to in land titles as Maota Pulemanava" (Thompson 1927: 118).

Thomson further described that to the westward of the mound was a hollow, which could have been a hill where some of the earth of red loam making up the mound may have come from. Thomson suggested (1927: 120) that the purpose of the mound was to serve as a barrier to an attacking force since it is situated on a narrow neck between the precipitous banks of the Vaivase and Fagali'i streams. An oral account indicates that it was an elevated platform where the Tongans had their houses. Yet another legend states that a high chief of Saleupolu called Pulemanava ordered his followers to build this mound for him to set up his manor house (*maota*). Thomson also discussed (1927: 121) that the building of the mound would have necessitated a large work force and that the number of people in the area must have been a lot more extensive in ancient times than in the 1920s.

Derek Freeman surveyed, mapped and discussed eight large mounds found three miles (4.8 km) east of the township of Apia located close to Tausala [Fagali'i] stream (Figure 6a). He described that:

...seven of the mounds are truncated, regular pyramids of earth but the eighth is a truncated, conical mound of earth and stone (Freeman 1944: 145).

He considered the latter to have a different origin than the rest.. The most impressive, Laupule mound, which according to Freeman measured c. 346 x 314 feet (105.5 x 97.5 meters) at the base and c. 190 x 143 feet (58 x 43.5 meters) on the upper surface and c. 40 feet (12 meters) in height. Freeman doesn't agree with Thomson that a hill originally was standing here, and suggests that the pathway made in the mound, which commences in the north eastern corner of the base and proceeds at an easy grade to the top (see Figure 3), estimated by Freeman to around six feet (1.8 meter) wide, seems to be an original feature.

There are three other large size mounds close to Laupule, two in the front towards the sea, and one in the rear toward the Fagali'i stream. The two in front are according to Freeman situated 90 yards (82 meter) from Laupule and the easternmost is c. 151 x 114 feet (46 x 35 meters) and the westernmost is c. 152 x 114 feet (64.5 x 45.7 meters) but both are only c. 7 feet (2 meters) high. The mound in the rear of Laupule was 190 x 139 feet (58 x 42 meters) and 12 feet (3.6 meters) high but much more eroded than the others.

On the east side of the Tausala [Fagali'i] stream three other larger mounds are situated. All three of them are, according to Freeman, called Tapuitema mounds (*evening star*) (Freeman 1944: 147). The largest is c. 384 x 235 feet (117 x 71.5 meters) but only 15 feet (4.5 meters) high. Just adjoining this mound on the seaward side is a 238 x 139 feet (72 x 42 meters) large mound c. 13 feet (4 meters) high. The third Tapuitema mound is further to the south east and its base measurements are 165 x 128 feet (50 x 39 meters) and 12 feet (3.6 meters) high. The area where the Tapuitema mounds are located has been subdivided by the Government into lots during the last decades and modern houses are today situated on top of them. Thereby the mounds have been levelled out and they are only partly visible today. The largest of the Tapuitema mounds is still visible in the western end of Doctors road on the lots 1920 and 1921.

Freeman states (1944: 148) that he got the information about the mounds from the orators (*tulafale*) and chiefs (*ali'i*) of Saleupolu district. He also notes that in ancient times this district was a single

community called Saleupolu, but in the 1940s these were two separate villages Vailele and Fagali'i. Saleupolu was according to Freeman's informants once very large and consisted of "one hundred fuiala or village sections" inland on either side of the Tausala stream (ibid 1944: 149). The informants also stated that the rectangular mounds were created during the era of the famous chief Tupuivao (ibid 1944: 148) c. 250 years ago. Furthermore they recounted that Tupuivao's mother Taufau was the grand-daughter of Salamasina of the Tui A'ana line whose mother Vaetoeifanga, was the daughter of the king of Tonga. This Salamasina came according to Samoan oral history to hold the four titles of Tui Atua, Tui A'ana, Taimasoali'i and Ngatoa'itele, which together are known as *Tafa'ifa* (Davidson 1967: 28). Freeman notes that titles are not necessarily a hereditary right but also given by the districts. Taufau, the mother of Tupuivao, only received the Tui Atua and Tui A'ana titles.

Oral tradition also gives the account that Taufau on her death bed deprived Tupuivao of her two high titles and instead gave them to her nephew Faumuina (Freeman 1944: 150). Tupuivao had strong claims on these titles but also to the titles of Tamasoali'i and Ngatoa'itele. It is likely that he aspired to the *Tafa'ifa* title and thus war between the cousins followed and finally Tupuivao was defeated and took refuge to the island of Tutuila. According to Freeman's informants the chief Tupuivao was known for his great cruelty and his name was synonymous with despotism, tyranny and cannibalism (ibid 1944: 149). The name of the mound Laupule is interpreted as; *power* or *to command*. As to the purpose of building the mound, according to Freeman and his informants (ibid 1944: 150), Tupuivao erected it to build his house on top as a symbol of power. Te Rangi Hiroa (1930: 66) mentions that the height and size of the *paepae* (house platform) that the *fale* (house) was erected on, was one way of expressing the hierarchy of rank. The Tapuitea mounds on the East bank of the Tausala (Fagali'i) stream were said to be used by Tupuivao's warriors (ibid 1944: 150).

According to Freeman (1944: 151) all village units' form districts together with other village units, which have a *malae* (community ground) and *fono* (council of chiefs) and these districts together with other districts owe allegiance to a High Chief.

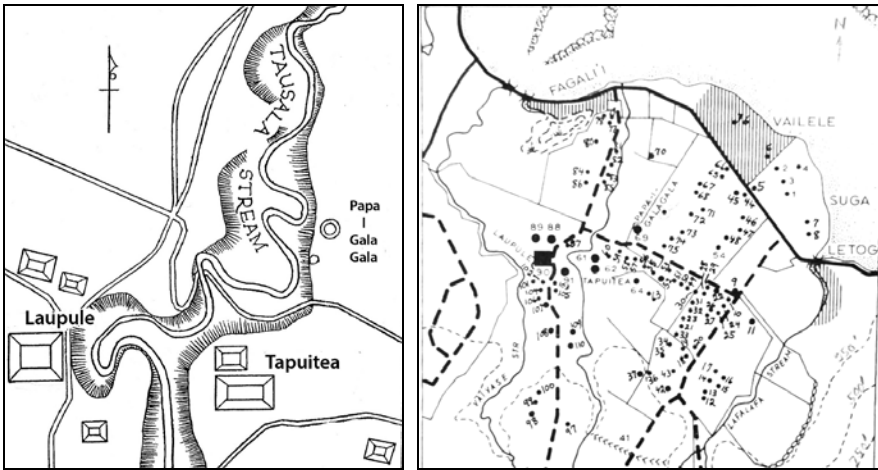


Figure 6. a) Location of Laupule and Tapuitea mounds after Freeman 1940.
b) Vailele survey by Roger Green (Auckland Museum Archive).

On Upolu these would be the titles of Tui Atua, Tui A'ana and Malietoa. Today the two villages of Vailele and Fagali'i, which were known formerly as Saleupolu, are part of the Vaimaunga district, which owes allegiance to Malietoa. This was, according to Freeman's informants, different in ancient times when the people of Saleupolu only owed the allegiance to their own high chief Salima, who lived three generations before Tupuivao.

The Vailele survey was carried out by Roger Green in the 1960s (1969: 98) (Figure 6b). He recorded 110 sites made up of small to medium house platforms of earth c. 5-10 m mainly. He also mentions the Laupule mound and gave the mounds site inventory numbers. Based on genealogies worked out by Green (1969: 102) Tupuivao built this mound around AD 1615-1640.

Test excavation in 2010

The mound is situated in Tuamasaga district, Fagali'i-uta, a subdivision of parcel 1146, on lot no. 2984. The mound was visited by Martinsson-Wallin in 2005 to investigate possibilities to research and excavate at the site. In 2010 we were granted permission by the landowner *Afioga Faamausili Papaalii Moli Malietoa* to make a test excavation and mapping of the mound. It was carried out as a field school during two weeks (course HAR 200 at NUS) with archaeology students from Samoa and Sweden. The measurements of the structure are 105 x 95 meters at

the base, 58 x 44 meters at the flat top and it is 12 meters high; making up a c. 45000 m³ large mound.

Aims with the archaeological investigation:

1. To compile the research history of the mound and carry out mapping of Laupule and the two lower mounds to the seaward side of Laupule to compare with Thompson's and Freeman's measurements and maps.
2. To obtain material to date the mound with archaeological methods.
3. To investigate how the mound is constructed, if it is built in several stages and if it is made up of mainly soil, and thus suited to the use of ground penetrating radar for future investigations.
4. To investigate if there are indications of cultural activities at this site prior the building of the mound.

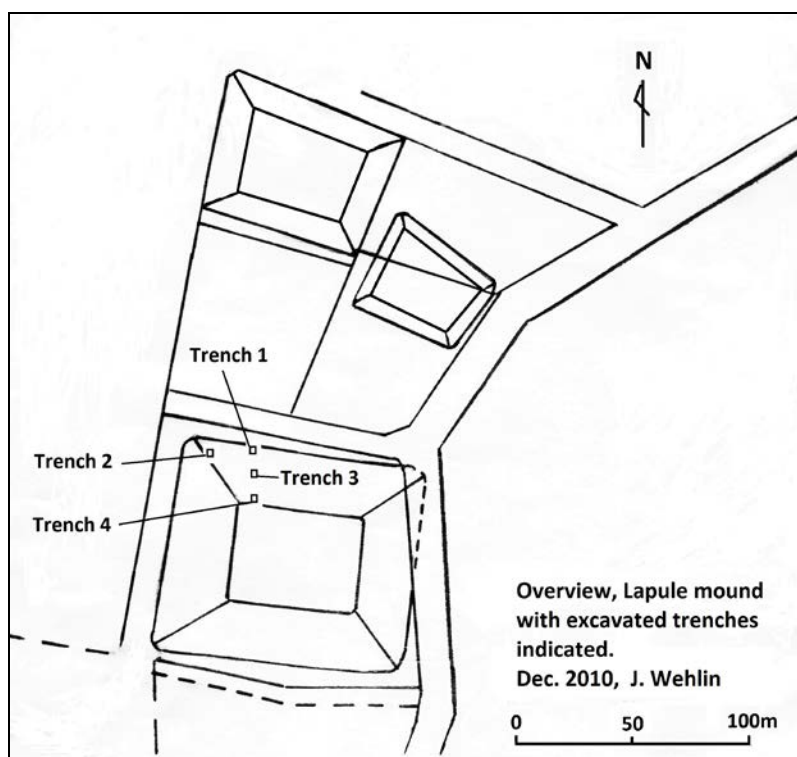


Figure 7. Mapping of Laupule mounds and excavated trenches.

Two 1 x 3 meter test trenches were outlined at the base of the mound on the North side. Trench 1 was placed in an N-S direction on the slope of the mound. Trench 2 was outlined in the Northwest corner in a NE-SW direction (Figures 7). Two additional test trenches (3 and 4) 1 x 1 m, were outlined on the North Slope. Trench 4 was excavated close to the top and trench 3 halfway to the top (Martinsson-Wallin 2011c).



Figure 8. Trench 2 dispersed platform with post hole (photo: Helene Martinsson-Wallin).



Figure 9. Edge part of type IV adze (photo: Helene Martinsson-Wallin).

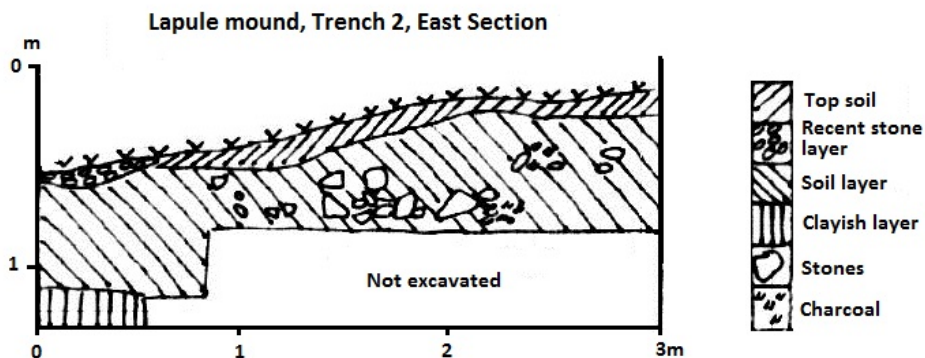


Figure 10. Section of trench 2.



Figure 11. Samoan archaeology students Samantha Kwan and Lafaeli Eli drawing section in trench 2 (Photo: Helene Martinsson-Wallin).

The preliminary results

- The mound seems to be built up of soil mainly but shows layering of softer soil/clay/gravel and a few larger stones c. 40-60 cm in size.
- The soil was probably brought from the banks of streams to the east and west, but the western gully probably provided most of the soil. This has altered the landscape and enhanced the gullies with the mound in the middle making this a perfect place of defence.
- Cultural activities were found when we excavated trench 2 in the north-west corner of the mound. These remains are probably from the time of the construction of the mound or just prior to it. The edge of a type IV basalt adze (Green and Davidson 1969:24) and a dispersed platform with indications of postholes and charcoal was found. Too little dateable material was retrieved to enable reliable radiocarbon dating.
- Further investigations are recommended and should include georadar/magnetometer and extension of trench 2 to obtain more material for archaeological dating.

- The Laupule and Tapuitema mounds are significant ancient monuments of great cultural value. These sites should be incorporated into the database (worked out by Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment MNRE in 2010) of sites of high cultural value in Samoa. Further scientific work should be carried out in collaboration with the landowners and the National University of Samoa and thus also provide training for students of Archaeology. A management plan to protect and preserve this site should be worked out between the state and the landowners which also should include a plan to make Laupule and adjacent lower mounds a visitor site.

MONUMENTS AND PEOPLE – SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE BUILT LANDSCAPE OF INDEPENDENT SAMOA.

The Past

Independent Samoa has c. 3000 years of human history. It is not known if the initial settlers built large mounds or other monuments of stone and soil but the few archaeological investigations here and on neighbouring West Polynesian islands do not indicate that monument building took place until the 12th century (Martinsson-Wallin 2007; Clark et al. 2008). Three large mounds have so far been involved in research of the mound building tradition in Samoa. The Pulemelei mound is probably the most significant and to date the best researched (Martinsson-Wallin 2007). Initial archaeological research has been carried out at Laupule mounds (Martinsson-Wallin 2011c). The Sa'anapu mound has been cleared due to the attention drawn to the place by a film documentary in 2007 made as an assignment by student Steven Percival in Martinsson-Wallin's course in Archaeology (HAR 100) at NUS, and due to private initiative by the landowners. Mapping and archaeological investigation have so far not been carried out but we have made several excursions with students and colleagues over the years and the local community is trying to make this place into a visitors site.

The Pulemelei case indicated that a previously utilised site was chosen to build a large mound around the 12th-13th century. The slabs

on edge making up a sort of outline frame of the structure were detected at the bottom layer. This could indicate that this is the work of Tongans, and thus equivalent to the stone work making up the *langi* structures. However, at Pulemelei the slabs on edge were of basalt stone and the *langi* stones are mainly of beach rock. The platform/mound at the bottom at Pulemelei which was detected by the use of geophysical analysis, should not be ruled out as containing a potential burial vault. This could tie Pulemelei to the *langi* tradition but so far no direct evidence confirms this (Clark and Biran 2007). Excavation at the so called "Tongan wall" a kilometre up-hill from Pulemelei by us in 2004 (Martinsson-Wallin et al. 2007: 57) indicates that this feature is contemporary with or even slightly older than the initial Pulemelei platform. This could point to a Tongan connection but alternative interpretations could also explain the name of the wall.

The current research shows that there are two main types of large mound; the irregular pigeon snaring mounds (*tia seu lupe*) usually at inland locations, and probably dating within the last 300-500 years; and large scale truncated mounds making up high raised platforms with slanting sides with dates going back 700-900 years. The former, with slight differences in outline and shape but similar use, exists on various islands in West Polynesia, especially in Tonga, Independent Samoa and American Samoa and are tied to the chiefly sport of pigeon hunting. Large truncated mounds exist as chiefly burial mounds, *langi*, in Tonga and a few other large scale mounds found on other West Polynesian islands usually related to chiefly power. The largest two are found in Independent Samoa and are almost non-existent in American Samoa. Additional sites to the ones found today could have existed but have been destroyed. However, if additional really large scale sites existed, it is likely that the memory of these would have been preserved in some way either in oral traditions or as ruined physical structures. One such site which was partly destroyed and probably had some antiquity was found by us in 2007 at Vaio-su-uta, and subsequently totally removed due to the expansion of the township. Another large scale site is the platform at Sapapali'i and at Mulifanua surveyed by Jennings team (Jennings et al. 1976; Jennings and Holmer 1980, 1982).

Archaeological investigations to date place initial building of larger mounds to 700-900 years ago and it is not unlikely that this coincides with the expansion of Tongan rule and population increases at certain

productive or in other ways important sites in Samoa. A population increase usually influences the emergence of hierarchies and a more complex society.

It is likely that both the addition and modification of Pulemelei, that our archaeological investigations indicated to have occurred 400-600 years ago, and the building of the Laupule and Tapuitea mounds has connections to the *Tafa'ifa* title. Meleisea discusses (1995: 19-36) that Samoan society was more hierarchical during this time than later on, which is also something that could be indicated by the cultural practice of building mounds. There is a possible relationship between large scale mounds and Tongan influence, the *Tafa'ifa* title aspiration, population increase, as well as multiple uses of highly visible sites for exercising and displaying chiefly power and places for defence and ritual activities. Oral traditions generally discuss all mounds found in the bush as pigeon snaring mounds (*tia seu lupe*). This means that the large truncated mounds and their use as house and ritual platforms attached to chiefly power have been subjected to oblivion. It is not certain but highly likely that this oblivion could be an active choice due to ambivalence to the Tongan connection as well as the introduction of Christianity. The lack of sense of history among contemporary Samoans, as Buist argues (see above), might be a phenomenon tied to the contact era. The mega scale built environment tied to power and ritual use of the past could actually instead be interpreted in the terminology *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989), as memory places which are tied to a sense of history but a history that subsequently has been forgotten and hidden away.

The present

The conception of prehistory and its built environment is weak in contemporary Samoa. The key factors identified for this weak position are: firstly, the strong Christian influence which questions the pagan past in Samoa, especially sites of ritual/ceremonial importance; secondly, the complex relationship to the Tongans; thirdly, that Samoa can be identified as a “memory society/milieu” or at least in-between a memory society and a history society where the extended family relations are more important than the State. The information about prehistoric Samoa and its built environment is almost non-existent in the curriculum at primary or secondary level education in Samoa (Bornfalk-Back 2008). Oral tradition is considered as explaining Samoan

society. There are only a few popular accounts of archaeological features made available to the general public – the first includes two short documentaries made by us in collaboration with documentary film maker Steven Percival in 2007 on the mound in Sa'anapu-uta and the *Fale o le fe'e* (house of the octopus) in Magiagi. Secondly, an initial museum display on Samoan prehistory was worked out by Martinsson-Wallin and students in 2011 and re-furbished in 2013. These presentations have been part of the Linnaeus-Palme exchange and have involved student participation. The re-furbishing also involved collaborations with the staff at the National Museum of Samoa (*Fale Mata Aga*).

In contemporary Samoa there is no coherent legal protection or management praxis tied archaeological or historical sites. The cultural practice does not include the built material culture of the past but instead a strong focus is on the current built material culture, especially in the form of erecting new church buildings. In the Cultural Policy 2010, culture heritage is defined as; *aganu'u* (extended family) relationship and adhered cognitive and materialistic values as material goods as fine mats (*'ietoga*) and bark cloth (*siapo*), the art of tattoo (*tatau*). This also includes food such as the coconut (*nu'u*), roasted pig (*pu'a*) and boxes of tinned fish, making the Sunday lunch in the *umu* (*tonoahi*), presenting and exchanging gifts (*so'a*), the customary land practice and the chiefly system (*mata'i* system) as well as oral traditions and the language with a high and a low language. These phenomena are stated as very important in contemporary Samoa and are placed under the label of *fa'a Samoa*, the 'Samoan way of doing things' e.g. the Samoan cultural practice. The focus is on protecting and managing this cultural practice, which actually changes and is influenced by modernisation and globalisation and in many ways can't be protected and preserved. The protection of historical cultural material remains e.g. the relationship to large prehistoric mounds are not a major focus but something seen as alien and pagan and tied to Western cultural management practices and lifestyles. The oral traditions are important and have been collected in official volumes (*Samoa Ne'i Galo*) by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MESC) since the early 1990s. In doing so a History of Samoa is written down and the transformation (or re-transformation) of the society from a Memory society to a History society has begun. A survey carried out as a part of a Master's thesis using a reference group of

youths at Samoa and Leififi Colleges and workers at a factory in Apia (Hannikainen 2013) showed that among these groups oral traditions are becoming less known and decreasingly important. The reason for this is probably due to modernisation and globalisation and the importance placed on family issues. The *siapo* have in many instances been replaced by cloth (e.g. lace at funerals etc.) and the coconut replaced by wine or beer, the roasted pig by tins of corned beef and money is now circulating as gifts, and redistributed. The fine mats (*'ietoga*), the chiefly *matai'i* titles, (however currently split, devaluated and contested), tied to land and the customary tenure system, and the gift giving systems are still important parts of the *fa'a Samoa*. There have been initiatives and demands recently from the public to create a Heritage law and a Heritage Board but the suggestions remain 'teeth-less'. The public interest in preserving monuments from the past was triggered by the PM's decision to tear down the traditional Fale Fono building, situated on the important Mulinu'u peninsula close to the Government building and Lands and Courts house. The Fale Fono was the traditional house where the declaration of independents and the constitution were signed in 1962. The tearing down of the building was done just in time for the 50 year celebration of independence, since the building according to the PM was *ugly and unsafe* (Samoan Observer March 8-10 2012). This action triggered many protests and public demands to appoint a law reform commission to create a Heritage law and Heritage Board.

CONTEMPLATIONS

There are several considerations to make when studying and interpreting the temporal status and meaning of the prehistoric mounds in Samoa. The cultural practice(s) is (are) tied to landscape utilisation and modification as well as inter- and intra-island interactions. This should be investigated further in the form of archaeological dating and survey of sites in Samoa and beyond and be paired with spatial and agent based GIS modelling studies to understand cultural practices at various temporal scales to reach a deeper understanding of the role, emergence and relationship of these sites. Other considerations in relation to the past built material culture include current cultural practices and how these are tied to relationships, perspectives and values that do not include the management and protection of the

prehistoric and historic built material culture to any great extent. This makes the idea of the value of research on these sites weak and the protection and management of these sites is not seen as a priority. However, with infrastructural changes and globalisation, including an intensification of inland agriculture, it is evident that built prehistoric and historic material culture is in danger of being lost. The consequence down the line is a loss of important parts of Samoan culture and ultimately this is an erosion of identity and sense of belonging as well as the risk of losing an asset which could generate income to local communities and the State in promoting cultural tourism. The few large monuments of Samoa and their contexts should be subject to further investigation as well as protection and management for the benefit of Samoans in various ways.

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Fa'afetai lava

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