

## EARTHMOUNDS IN SAMOA.

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On the islands of the Samoan Group there are numerous mounds of earth or stone of great antiquity. The mounds are commonly shaped like the lower section of an Egyptian pyramid. One of the best known locally is at the western end of Upolu in Mulifanua plantation. This particular mound, called Malava, is approximately 200 feet long, 40 feet wide and 12 feet high. The top is flat and the four sides have approximately the same slope, 1 in 2 to 1 in 3. According to one tradition the mound was erected by Tuifaasisina, a high chief of the Samoans, prior to the Tongan invasion. According to another account a small mound was originally built by Samoans under Tongan rule. As the Tongans were forced to withdraw this mound was built bigger by the Tongans and their allies and served as a fort. The famous speech of the defeated Tongans from which the title "Malietoa" was derived, "Malo-tau, Malietoa" (well fought, well done, brave men), was pronounced only a short distance away.

At Leulumoega, about eight miles distant from this mound, is another called Lagi. This is mostly of stone and is about 300 feet square and 10 to 15 feet high. Three of the four corners are broken down so that exact measurements are impossible. According to tradition, about 18 generations ago Tuiaana Tamalelagi defeated Tuiaana Sagate, and then made the latter with his followers erect this mound to show their subjugation. The conquering chief



FIG. 1.—Rough Field Sketch of Maota Pulemanava, showing typical truncated pyramid form of Samoan Mounds.

built his *fale* on the top of the mound. Instead of our present day custom of the victors erecting a triumphal arch, the procedure then seemed very general for the vanquished to be forced to erect a mound as evidence of their defeat.

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 (Fig. 1). This mound is situated about one half mile inland from the sea shore and about 250 feet above sea level at a point where the Vaivase brook approaches closely to the Fagalii. Each stream has eroded its bed until they are now about 200 feet below the level of the surrounding country.

The mound is in the form of a truncated pyramid 35 feet high, of which the base is 100 yards by 95 yards (Fig. 2). The upper surface measures 60 yards by 43 yards. The longer sides run east and west and the slope, which is about 1 in 3, is slightly steeper on the north and south sides. The top of the mound, while very smooth and even, is slightly lower on the south-east corner. A few scattered coconut palms and breadfruit trees are now found growing on both the top and sides.

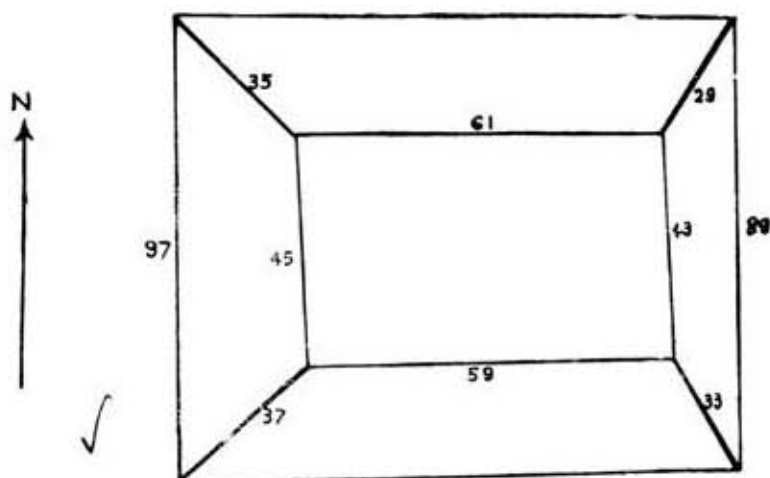


FIG. 2.—Plan of Samoan Earth Mound, Maota Pulemanava; dimensions are given in yards. The slight irregularity from the square on the east side is caused by a roadway cut into the mound to avoid a precipitous ravine.

On the northern side a pathway about 10 feet wide has been cut on which by easy grade one can walk to the top of the mound. The uniform slope of the pathway and

the fact that it is the same width at the top and bottom would indicate that it had not been a casually formed foot-path.

Looking down from the top of the mound its artificial character is much more apparent than when seen from the bottom: the square corners and smooth sides are impressive evidence of human agency. The earth on the top of the mound is of red loam similar to the earth of the surrounding country. There is a small hollow to the westward where part of the earth may have been obtained. It is possible that a hill stood here originally and at a great expenditure of labour has been worked down into its present shape. Considering the rainfall in the locality is about 125 inches per year, of which the greater part falls in tropical down-pours in three or four months of the rainy season, it is remarkable that the mound has not been washed away.

The purpose of the mound seems to have been to serve as a barrier to an attacking force. Its position lying across and completely filling the narrow neck between the precipitous banks of the Vaivase and Fagalii would make it possible for a few men to resist a very large number.

Legends ascribe an entirely different purpose to its structure. One account states that the mound was erected as an elevated platform where the Tongan chiefs had their houses. Farther to the eastward, about 100 yards, is a small mound where their wives' *fale* were built. Another legend given me by ex-Judge Gurr is as follows: The high chief of Saleupolu, known as Pulemanava, ordered his followers who were numerous compared with the present day following of the chiefs of Saleupolu to build a mound of stone and earth upon which to erect his Maota (manor house). When this work was completed, two petty chiefs, Tuiafiso and Falesau, commenced to build a mound for their houses which was intended to equal in extent the mound of Pulemanava. This presumption on the part of Tuiafiso and Falesau enraged Pulemanava and his people, who turned on the two minor and weaker chiefs and banished them from Upolu. Tuiafiso and Falesau fled to Fitiuta, eastern end of Manu'a and dwelt there for some generations. During the time they were away in Manu'a they acquired certain rights, including the title Tufele, and their descendants upon returning to the house of their ancestors at Fagalii brought back these

rights and continued to hold them by naming a member of the family Tufele. This is the origin of the relationship of the Tufele of Fitiuta with the Saleupolu people.

The cost of making excavations on the mound would be considerable, and it is believed on confessedly small evidence that the artifacts brought to light in digging would be few in number.

It is certain that even if the builders had a small hill to work on as a foundation an enormous amount of work has been required. The only method of moving earth would be in baskets. The social organisation would probably be a serfdom such as existed one or two centuries ago. The population must have been much larger in that district than it is to-day.

In Samoa we have mounds innumerable—mounds for pigeon catching, mounds for house sites, mounds for forts and, possibly, mounds for holding meetings. It is so very hard to get to the ultimate truth on the subject of the purpose of mounds, who had the right to build mounds and who had not, that I have left out a great deal of material.