

Pulemelei mound excavations



Pulemelei mound is a 60x50 meter large and 12 meter high stone mound situated at the Letolo plantation in Savai'i. This imposing stepped mound with a flat surface on top is a central place in an extensive ancient settlement, which probably consisted of several inland villages or sub-villages. Over 3000 ancient house platforms, fences, large umu ti, roads and walkways can be found there.

Pulemelei mound and surrounding remains were excavated in 2002-2004. The mound is very likely built and reconstructed in three phases. The earliest platform was c. three meter high with an outline of cut stone standing on edge. This phase is dated to 900-700 years ago. During the following phase, an additional platform was placed on top, and then in the latest phase a one meter high platform with sunken walkways on the East and West side on top of that. The most recent phase is dated to c. 400 years ago. The inland villages at Letolo were probably abandoned just prior to European contact.

In addition to investigation of the mound, evidence of settlement activities going back 2000 years in time has been found on the south and west side, and under the mound. Pot sherds of the Polynesian plainware type, stone tools, and ovens (*umu*) were found here. In oral traditions this mound is said to have been be a council meeting place or pigeon-snaring mound. The former is more likely than the latter with meetings also involving ritual or ceremonial activities.

