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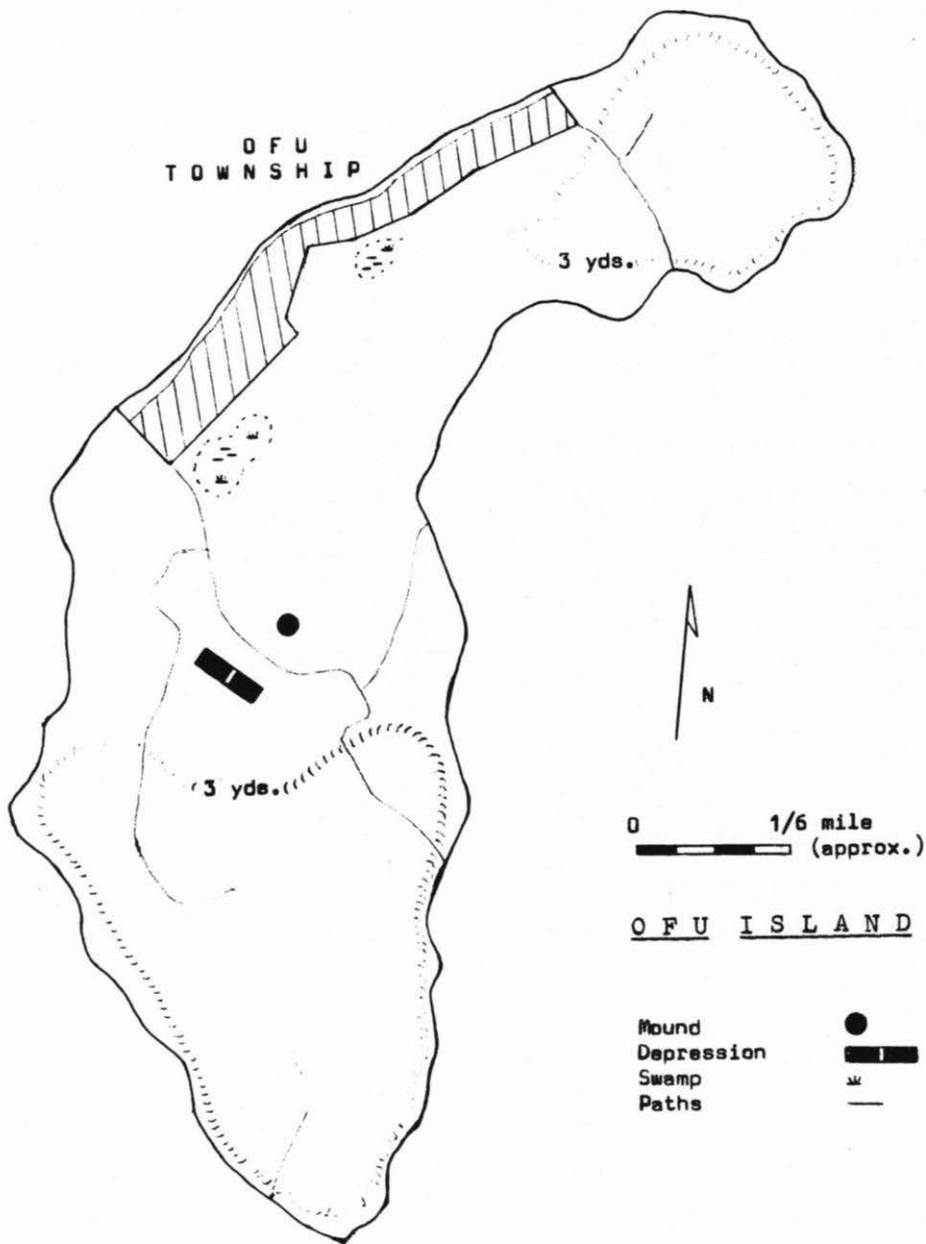
A NOTE ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS
ON THE ISLAND OF OFU, KINGDOM OF TONGA

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While doing field work on the island of Ofu, Vava'u Group, Kingdom of Tonga, from March to June 1976, I came across archaeological remains which have not been mentioned in the works of McKern⁽¹⁾ and Davidson⁽²⁾ and which I feel are of sufficient interest to Pacific archaeologists as to justify this short note.

Ofu is a raised coralline island, roughly 300 acres in size, with a present population of 175 living in 38 households clustered along the western coastline.⁽³⁾ The island is located 3½ miles south-east of Neiafu and is directly to the east at a distance of two miles from the village of Pangai where Ernest and Pearl Beaglehole conducted their field study in 1938-39. The precise location of Ofu is 18°42' south, and 173°58' west. According to one village tradition, the island was first settled by two men from Vasivasi, Fiji, named Tapuosi and Fakatoko, and many of the Ofu villagers are said to be descendants of Fakatoko.⁽⁴⁾ Tapuosi, according to this tradition, married the Female Tu'i Tonga Sinaitakala I, and became the first Tu'i Lakepa; the present lineage, Ha'a Falefisi, tracing its descent to this figure. Thus settlement may be inferred from this tradition to have gone back at least as far as the mid-1600s.⁽⁵⁾

The archaeological remains are located in the approximate centre of the island, and consist of a deep and rectangular depression bisected in the middle by a narrow break, and an earthen mound (see map). Although today there is a heavily traversed path, *hala pule'anga*, passing in between the mound and depression, the two are barely visible due to the thick vegetation covering the site, and local knowledge as to the significance or function of these remains is limited to the few older members of the village. According to the scant tradition I was able to elicit, these remains represent an unfinished fortification, *kolotau*, which was being constructed during the time of Finau Ulukalala. For some reason, perhaps the temporary abatement of internecine strife, work on the fortification abruptly stopped and the area has since fallen into disuse. I was told by at least one informant that a number of large stones had been removed from the site within his lifetime, and that these were used as building foundations in the village.



The rectangular depression is approximately 10 feet deep and 13 feet wide and, on the basis of morphology alone,⁽⁶⁾ it may be assumed to have represented the beginnings of a dry-moat. The narrow break approximately two feet wide bisecting the dry-moat probably would have led to a narrow aperture in the accompanying wall and would have allowed egress and ingress from the secured inner compound. There is however no noticeable embankment such as the ones recorded by McKern in surveys of fortifications elsewhere in Tonga and, short of an excavation, the precise identity or function of the sizeable earthen mound, whether or not an integral structure of the fortification, may only be guessed at.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) McKern, 1929.
- (2) Davidson, 1971.
- (3) By my enumeration in May of 1976.
- (4) More probably, and according to another version of the same village tradition however, the island of Ofu had been settled prior to the arrival of Fakatoko and Tapuosi,
- (5) See Gifford, 1929: 34.
- (6) McKern, 1929: 80-89. All measurements in this paper are approximate.

REFERENCES

- DAVIDSON, Janet M. 1971. Preliminary Report on an Archaeological Survey of the Vava'u Group, Tonga, in R. Fraser (comp.), *Cook Bicentenary Expedition in the South-west Pacific*. Wellington, Royal Society of New Zealand Bulletin 8, pp. 29-40.
- GIFFORD, Edward W. 1929. *Tongan Society*. Honolulu, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Bulletin, 61.
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