



The Drua Files

Fiji Islands Voyaging Society was established in 2009 to provide a Fiji presence in the 'Te Mana o Te Moana' voyaging fleet sponsored by Okeanos Foundation

FIVS objective is to re-energise Fijian sailing heritage

In 2010 FIVS became the custodian of Uto ni Yalo



WAQA TABU: The Great Drua

Historians all agree that DRUA were the finest blue-water ships built in this Ocean:

- “fastest sailing boat in existence”
- “capable of sailing nearer the wind than any European vessel”
- “the massive *drua* or *kalia* made last century in Fiji is justly celebrated as the most remarkable voyaging canoe ever to ply the Pacific”
- “the Fijian double canoe was the largest and finest sea-going vessel ever designed and built by the natives of Oceania before contact with Europeans”
- “the pinnacle of Oceanic canoe technology”



WAQA TABU: The Great Drua

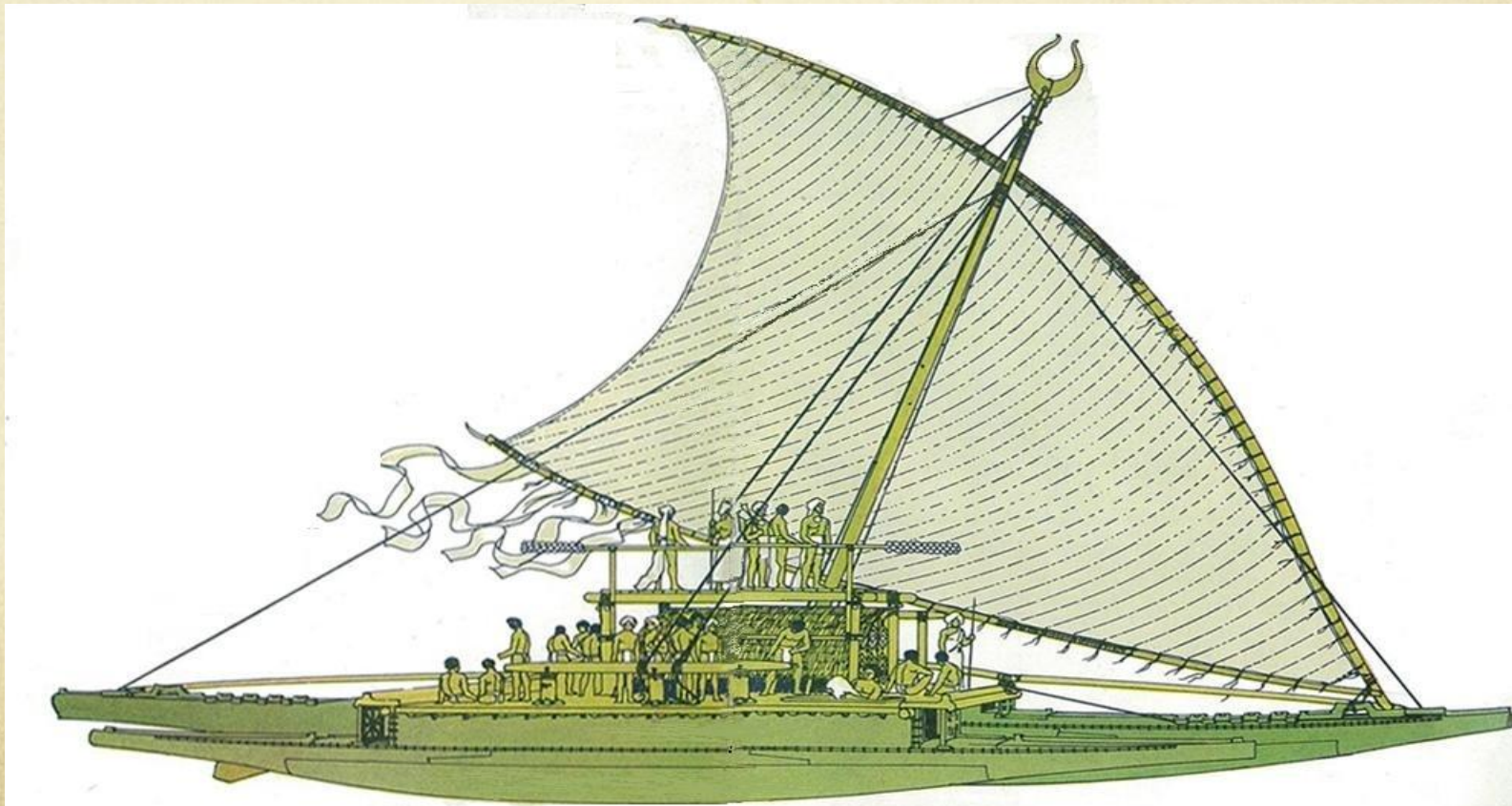
- Planked blue water ships with scarfed keels
- More than 100' in length
- Capable of more than 15kts
- Capable of sailing 3 points off the wind



DRUA were the naval attack ship of choice.

In war they were versatile destroyers

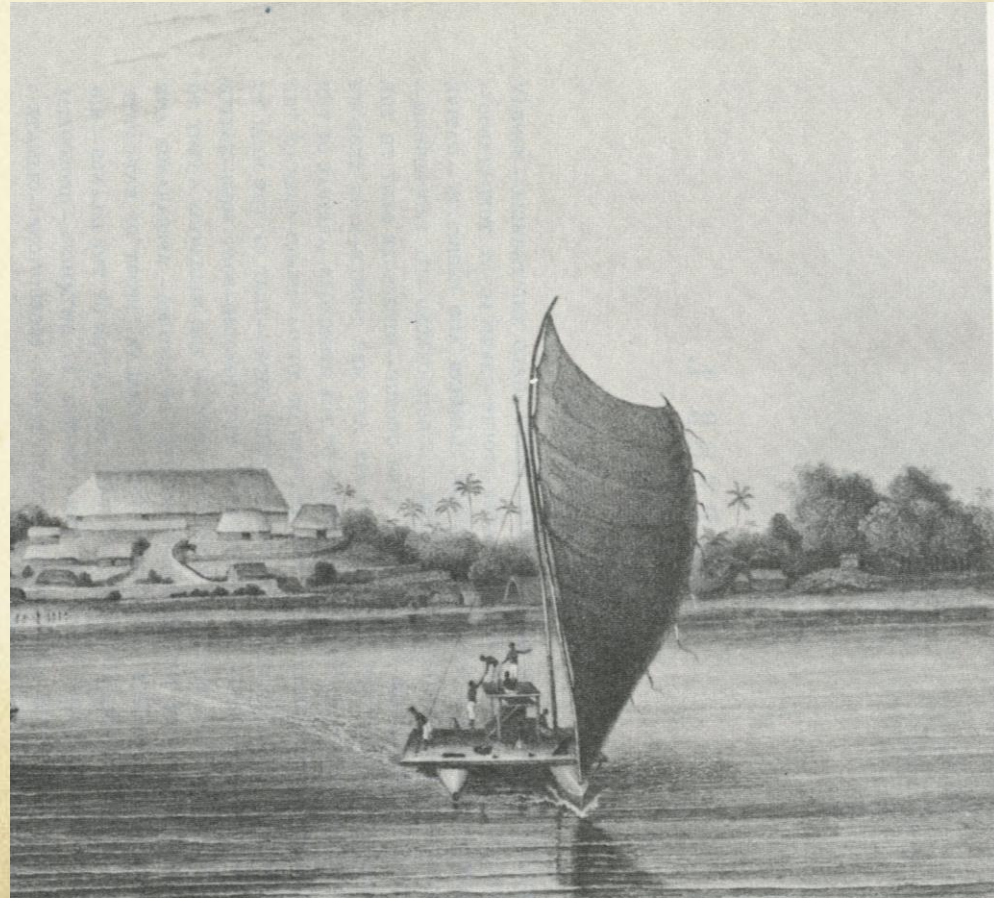
- high speed ramming machines attacking at more than 15kts
- fast, high-pursuit blockade runners and enforcers
- landing craft carrying more than 200 warriors each



In peace they were trading and envoy ships
capable of large loads

Regularly travelling between Fiji, Tonga and
Samoa and further

- “the beam would be 6 to 8 feet” ... “a man could easily walk in the hold without touching the deck.” ... “A pig could be roasted whole in the open cooking place and the food and water were easily stowed away for long voyages.” ... “carried 12 head of cattle in her holds from Natewa Bay in Vanua Levu to Levuka, a trip of 120 miles” another carried on deck from Tailevu to Suva a cargo of bagged maize sufficient to load the *Alarm* ketch of 30 tons and the *Xerifa* of 20 tons burden”.

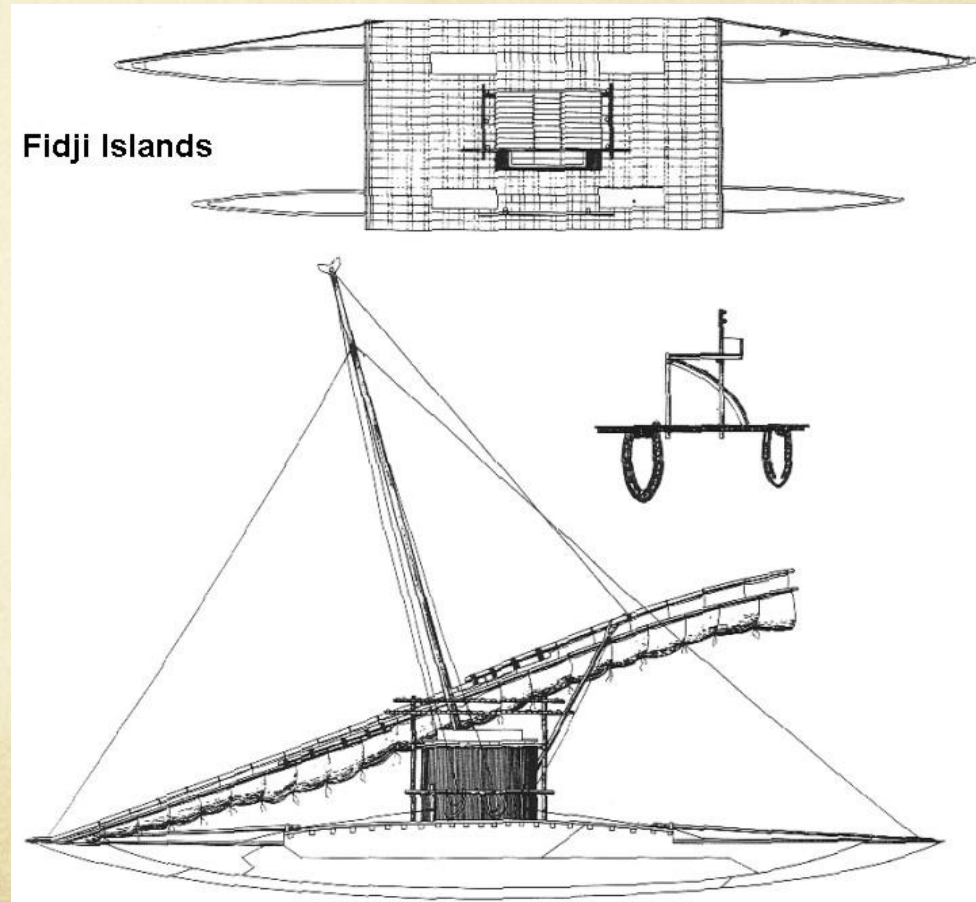


The Drua Files

For the last 3 years FIVS has undertaken a research programme into DRUA.

Drua are the icon of Fiji. Today the knowledge of drua has been all but lost.

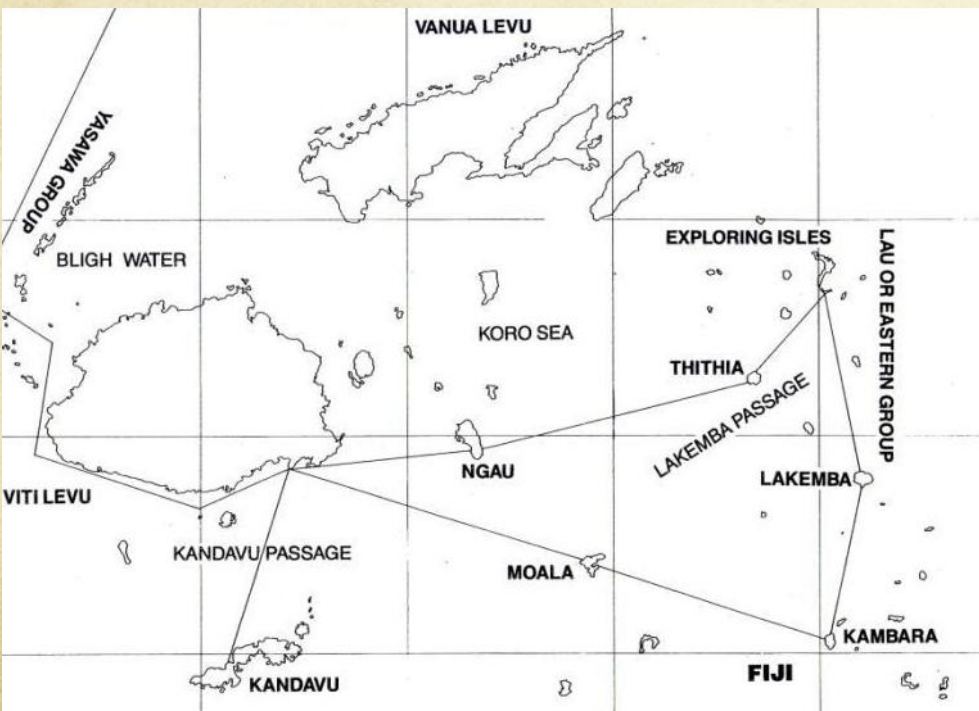
We have tried to work collaboratively with as many stakeholders as possible.



The Drua Files

To date FIVS have:

- Reviewed all available literature sources for records of drua (700+ references reviewed to date).
- Working with OCACPS and funded by USP, held talanoa sessions with the Mataisau (hereditary boatbuilding clans) in the Southern Lau (Kabara, Ogea, Fulaga & Moce (Korova).
- Convened a talanoa with Mataisau from across Fiji now living in Suva was held in November 2011.



The Drua Files

To our knowledge, this is the first time such a project has been attempted.

We have brought together the most comprehensive body of data around drua ever.

Some of the traditional knowledge collected from the Mataisau has never been previously recorded.

Given the age of some of our participants (e.g. the Tui Vulaga who at the age of 85 has built 22 drua in his life) we may have been just in time.



The Drua Files

The information on cultural heritage has been recorded on video and audio recorders.

All information recorded is only in the tongue – primarily Lauan dialects. It is not intended to translate this.

This project has highlighted the whole issue of how best to protect and preserve our heritage in culturally appropriate ways for the benefit of future generations. Ownership of knowledge of Drua rests rightfully with the mataisau.



The Great DRUA

There is intense debate over whether they were invented by Fijian, Samoan or Tongan designers.

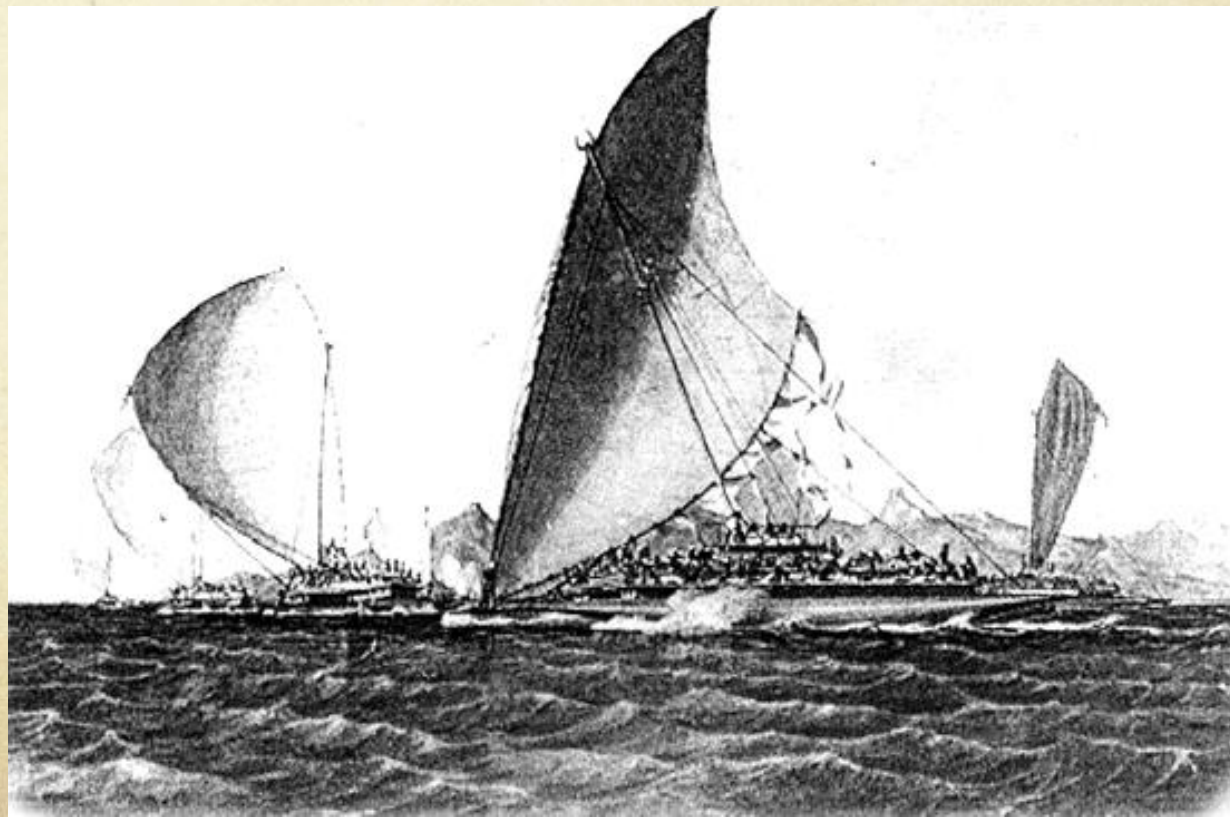
Some say the rig came from Micronesia; others that Tongans or Fijians passed the secret of their sails to their northern cousins.

The answers to these riddles may never be fully known. But they are evidence of an amazing relationship that connects all of us in central Oceania.



Drua were built in large numbers.

“An allied fleet in Wailea Bay in 1808 was composed of some 150 canoes” ... “a Bauan fleet in the Bau-Rewa wars of mid-century of about 200, counting together the double canoes, those with outriggers and sailing canoes” ... “when they sailed away, Laucala Bay was absolutely crowded with canoes” ... “Another Bauan canoe fleet in 1809 comprising 64 *drua*, 36 large *camakau* outrigger sailing canoes, 26 *tabilai* fighting canoes and 10 small *takia* sailing canoes; in all 136 canoes transporting some 2,700 men”.

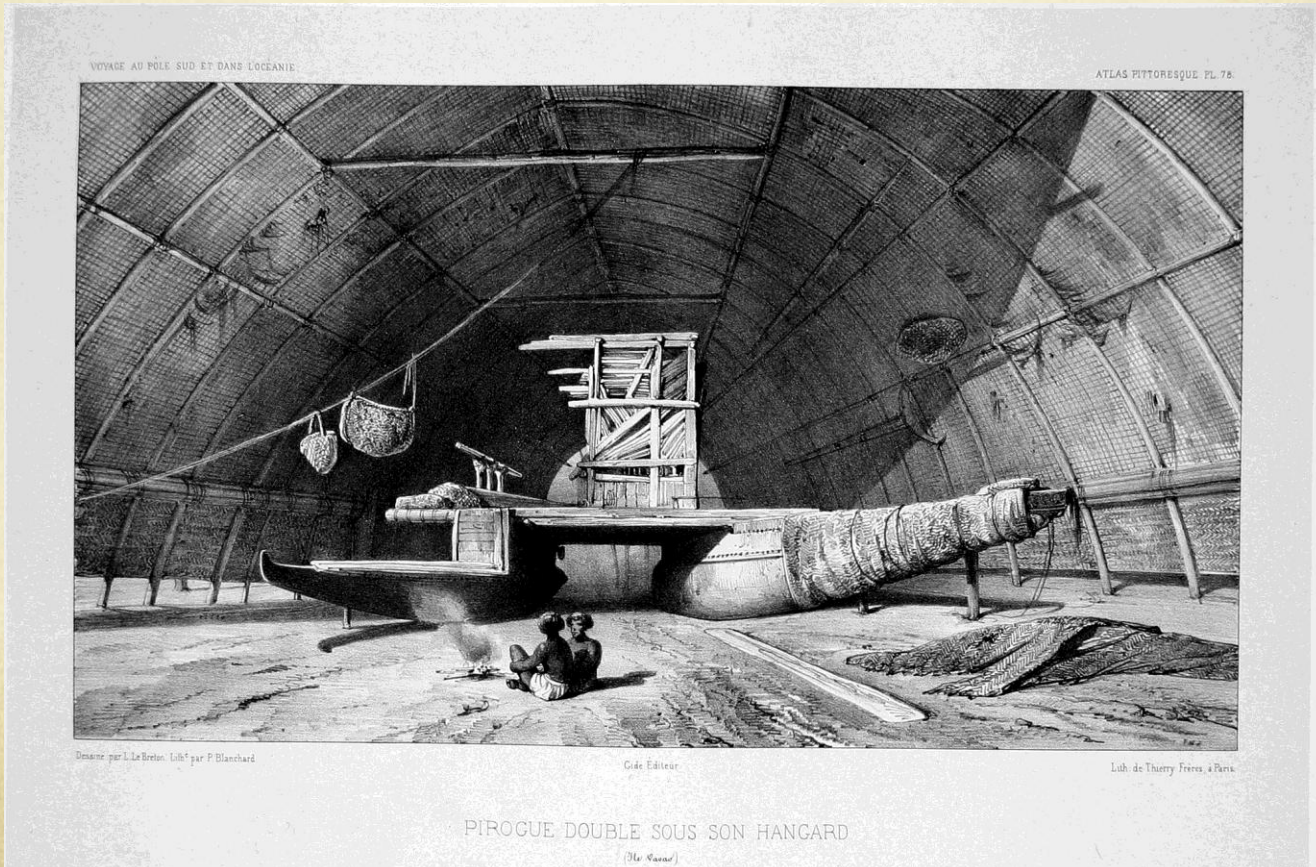


Drua were the most valuable asset a chief could possess.

Drua were given as highly prized gifts and tributes to other chiefs

They were often built as memorials to past chiefs.

Great chiefs were often buried inside their drua – the descendants of Mataisau still hold the knowledge of some of these burial sites. These could be the most important archeological sites in the Pacific.



Research results

Our talanoa have taught us that knowledge and pride in drua is still alive in our mataisau.

Although no great drua, the planked and keeled *tabetebete*, have been built in probably 100 years, the knowledge of their construction has been passed down – along with knowledge of *laca* (sails) which were as sophisticated as those of modern yachts.

This learning now resides with a handful of elders. We must act quickly if this knowledge is to live for future generations.



Research results

Our project has been simply to compile a database of knowledge about drua.

We need to acknowledge our informants as “Living Human Treasures”.

We need to take the research back to the communities we have received it from.

This was the first project approved under the USP research cluster programme and we are trying to set high standards.



Lessons learnt

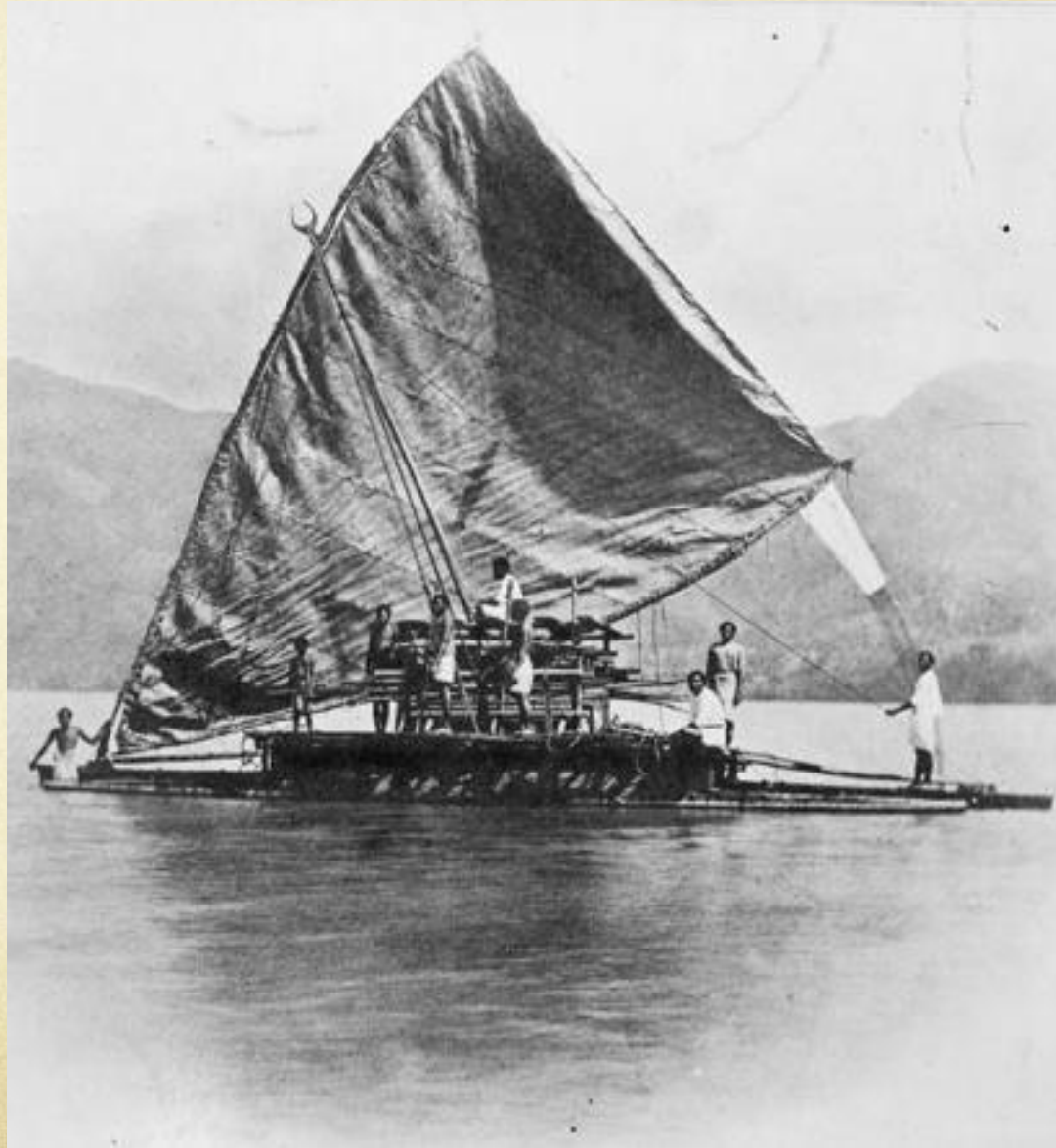
- *Our ancestors really were masters of their skills – skilled naval architects and shipwrights with outstanding knowledge of physics, engineering, aero and hydrodynamics*
- *Protecting traditional knowledge is not straight forward*
- *The past holds many lessons for the future*



One of the most important lessons is that it takes a whole community to build a great drua.

Each group has its tasks. The men were the carpenters, the women made the sails, but all came together – elders, men, women and youths – to make the magimagi – the fibre that binds the waqa together.

Our dream is to see drua back on the waters of Fiji and the Pacific – it will take us all working in unison with the direction of our elders to bind this dream into reality.



- It is time for Fiji to build new Drua. They are the central icon of our culture.
- We want to set a new target for Fiji - In 2016 Fiji should sail to the South Pacific Arts Festival in Guam on a Drua - crewed by Fijians, built in Fiji by Fijians.
- Achieving this target will take all of us to work together. We want to use this talanoa today and tonight to strategise how to make that happen.

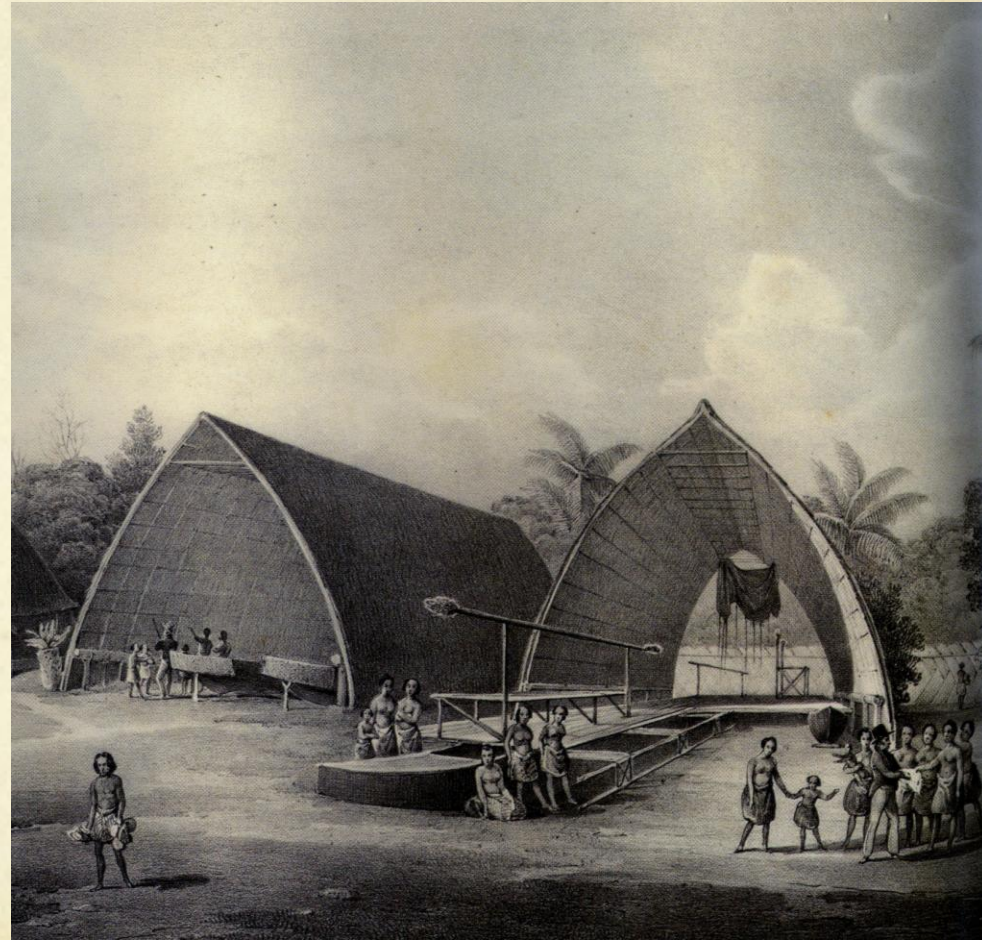
We need a coalition to achieve this:

- Mataisau & Lemaki
- ITaukei Affairs, Arts Council, Museum
- Univeristites – USP & FNU
- NGOs (eg Pacific Blue)
- Funders



It needs to be more than just a one-ship programme

- We need to keep drua culture alive in the places where drua were traditionally built.
- We need to get drua into every level of the education curriculum.
- We need to be extending this talanoa to include our cousins in Samoa, Tonga, Rotuma, Futuna, Micronesia, New Caledonia, Tokelau, Tuvalu
- All great drua also had vale ni waqa – huge, carefully built, aircraft-hanger sized houses. We would like to see one built at USP. It could be a home to drua – and navigation schools, carving workshops, weaving classes, canoe building, etc.
- We need to learn from our ancestors technical track record to develop sustainable solutions for tomorrow's sea-transport.



FIVS has learnt much from our experiences on Uto ni Yalo. Being part of the Te Mana o te Moana fleet has achieved the goal of getting Fijians back sailing.

But FIVS recognised from the outset that the journey would not be complete until we were again sailed on our Ocean on a DRUA – the sacred ship of our ancestors.

MALO

