

<http://www.justpacific.com/fiji/fijiphotos/sixty/index.html>

Historical photographs from Rod Ewins's personal collection

Photo card folder "Loloma Fiji Islands" ("*Love Fiji Islands*"):



This is a long connected strip of colour photographs, all of which were also published at the time as individual postcards, some of which I own and have put on my 'postcard' site, in the 'modern' section. The photographs are by Charles Stinson, son of W.J.B. (Bolton) Stinson, the founder of the original Stinsons Studios in 1912. Charles (later Sir Charles) was perhaps the most important of the post-war commercial photographers, as distinct from Fiji's unrivalled official government photographer, **Rob Wright**. Like Rob, Charles recorded the scenery of Fiji and the life of the people of all ethnicities. His photographs often go beyond being mere "postcard snapshots" and provide an aesthetically and culturally aware image of Fiji in the last days of its colonial era. He was also keen to use the emergent colour film technology, particularly Kodak's Ektachrome positive transparency film, which was at that time regarded as the best for producing print reproductions. He was for a number of years prominent in local government politics and finally retired to the Gold Coast of Queensland.

The folder is copyright 1968 by Curt Teich & Co.Inc., California, USA. Inside the front cover is a brief note on Fiji's location, geography, population, history, economy, tours & trips, sports and recreation. Inside the back cover is a small map of the island of Vitilevu (written as Viti Levu). These Curt Teich postcards

and folders were probably the first colour cards produced of Fiji which were printed sharply and in reasonable colour, though in the nature of Ektachrome of the time they tend to be weighted rather too heavily to the blue side of the spectrum. It should be noted, however, that some of the images were almost certainly photographed several years before this collection was produced.



Across the bay from Suva—Suvavau, Fiji"

Published by J. Butler, Suva, Fiji. R29002. Made in USA. Unused, undated. The place of course is Suvavou, not Suvavau. Suvavou means "New Suva", and it is the area out past Lami where the owners of the land on which Suva were to be built were forcibly re-settled.



"Canoeing — Fiji".

Publisher: A.M. Brodziak, Suva, Fiji. Used but stamp and postmark removed.
Univided back, probably about 1900.

This is interesting in that it shows the two common outriggers for use in rivers and coastal waters inside the reef. Neares is the simple dugout canoe (*takia*) similar to that in the previous picture. The second has washstrakes lashed onto the dugout with sinnet which can be clearly seen, and evidently also has a deck (*tau*) over the hull, and is thus called a *waqa vakatau*. The former was seldom sailed, certainly not at sea, while the latter could be sailed in virtually all conditions except major ocean voyages.



"Waiting for the tide".

Publisher: F.W.Caine, Suva, Fiji. #174819

These men are seated on a sea-going *waqa vakatau* canoe, with washstrakes added to the hull and decked over. This may be contrasted with the open-hulled dugout of the *takia*, above.

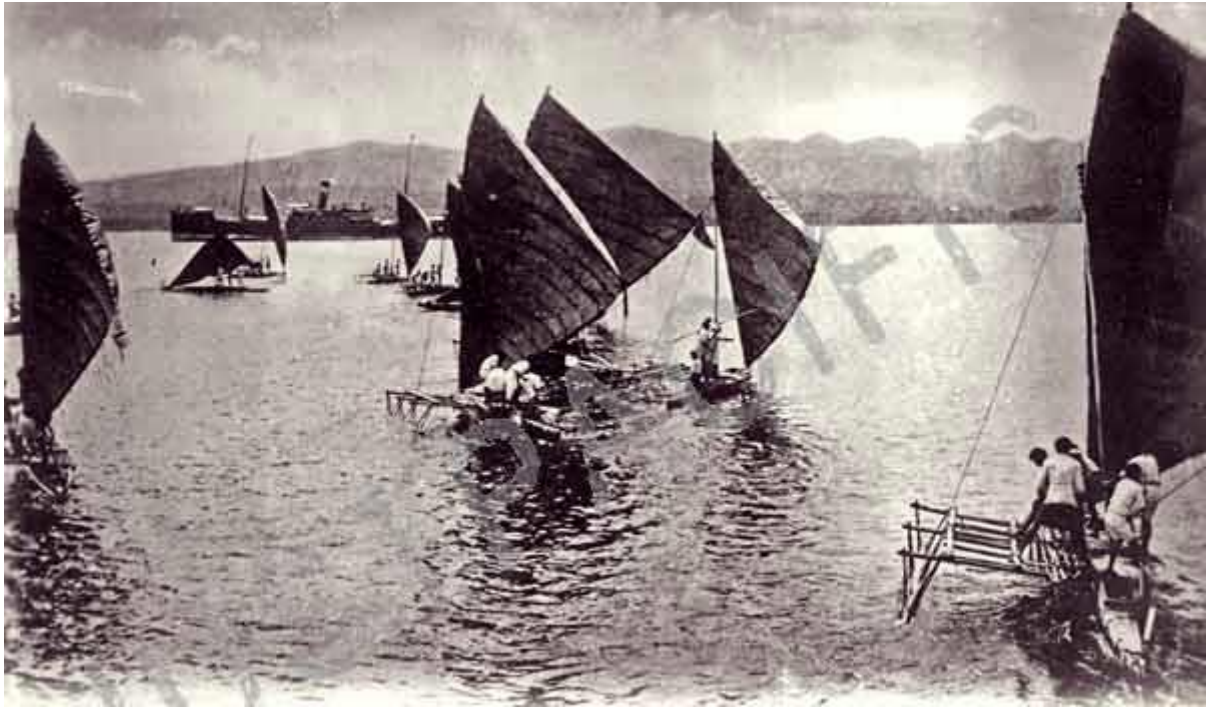


Outrigger canoe race.

J.W. Waters photographer. Original Collection: W.J. & R.M. Ewins.

Addressed and sent to Robert Ewins Esq., Coburg, Melbourne and signed "WE" [WJ Ewins]. Postage stamp and postmark have been removed.

Note that the correct term for small coastal sailing vessels such as these, with decked-in hulls, is *waqa vakatau* [*tau* = this small decking], NOT *takia* as one repeatedly hears. A *takia* is a river-going vessel with an open main hull [see photo], which would quickly swamp under sail at sea. Larger seagoing outriggers such as used to be common in the small islands were termed *camakau* [literally, "wooden outrigger", see drawing], with several types distinguished by the form of their bow, float, and rig. Today all are rare even in Lau.



A canoe race, Suva Harbour.

Published by Caines, Suva. Caines Series 106.

Unused. It is entirely possible that this shows the same canoe race as the previous picture, and the fact that Caine published it does not mean he took the photograph - it could just as well have been Waters again. Or conversely, both may have been taken by Caine. Card publishers in Fiji during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries swapped images freely, each one attaching his own imprimatur.

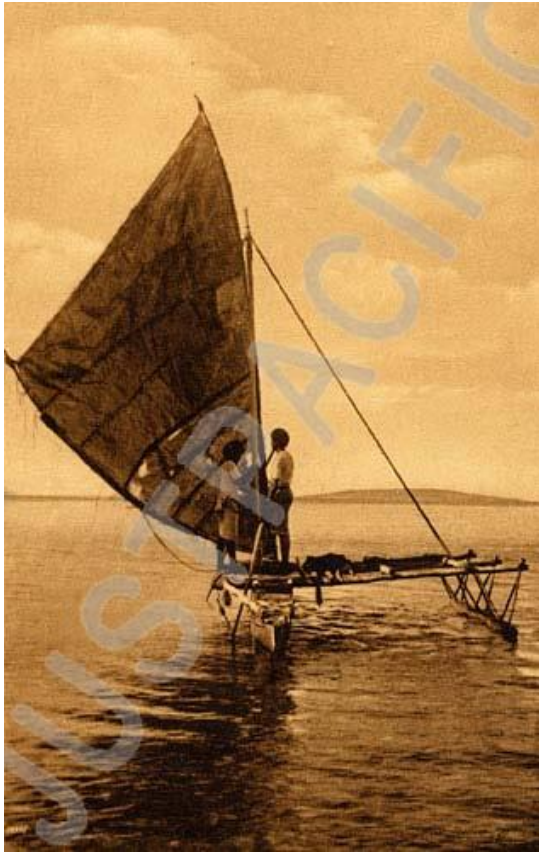


View of Bau Island, Fiji.

Photo by C.Meyer (photographer in Fiji from 1922 through the 1930s, his postcards sold through the Fiji Times & Herald stationery office. He finally died in Suva in 1967).

Used, Fiji George V stamp and postmark Suva Jul 1930. Addressed to Philip Howden Esq., Little Shaw, Rockshaw Rd., Merstham, Surrey, England. The jocular message reads "Salaams to Your Highness. Hope Your Highness flourisheth. Give my love to Your Highness's august parents and tell them I write soon. This is a jolly place. Ken"

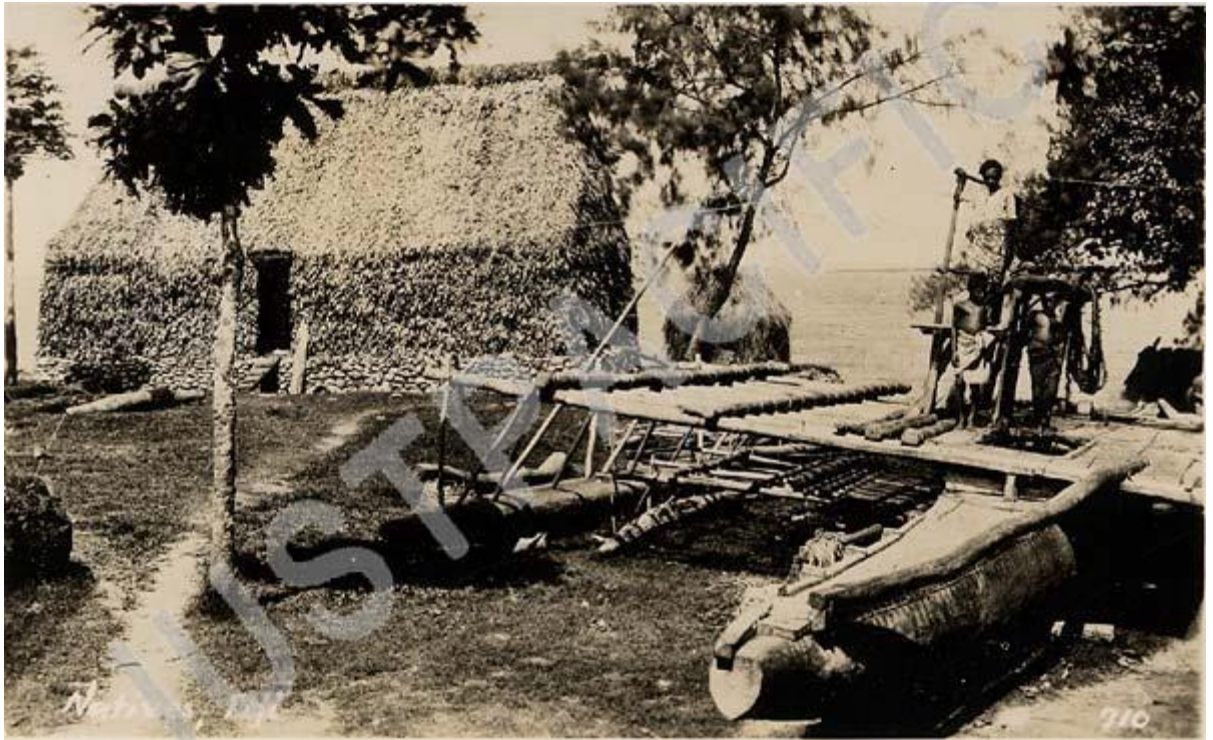
Though the caption on the face of the card styles this a view of Bau, it is far more interesting for the outrigger canoes (*camakau*) under sail, though the closest of them may have run aground as the sailor is poling as though to free it. This passage between Bau and the mainland of Vitilevu is very shallow, in fact able to be waded across at low tide (see [photo](#) of Bau crossing above), so that is not an unlikely possibility



"Fiji canoe".

Publisher: Stinson Studio No 18. Sepia-printed.

Unused postally but personal message written on back, dated Feb. 12th 1932. The original publication date of the "Stinson Studio" photographs, however, was 1912-13 (Stephenson 1997: 22), so the photograph dates from some time before that



"Natives, Fiji".

Unused. No publisher or date, but number 710 on face of card, along with caption. Date would be early 20th Century.

The thatched house or *vavevakaviti* is a good example of a completely traditional dwelling. It stands on a stone *yavu* housemound, and the main door is reached by a plank with footrungs. (There would be at least one other door for the family to come and go by, but traditional houses had no windows, as shown here.) Typically for coastal dwellings, the walls are finished with leaves of the *makita* tree (*Parinari laurina*) while the roof appears to be the foliage of reeds or grasses. But the centrepiece of this picture is the fine large *waqaniviti* or sailing canoe. It is a *camakau*, fully decked with a hatch for bailing. The structure on which the people are standing assisted with handling the rigging during sailing