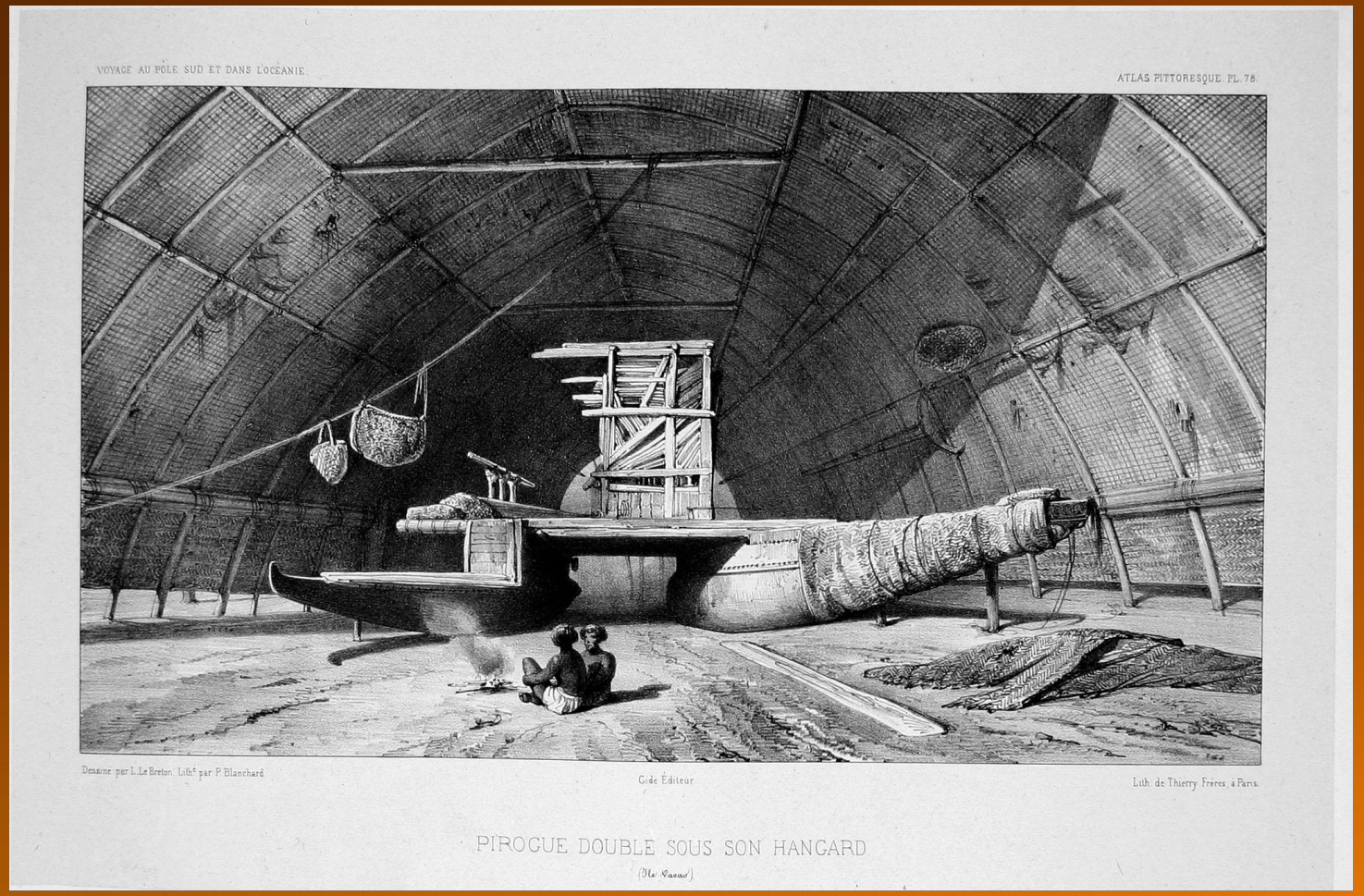
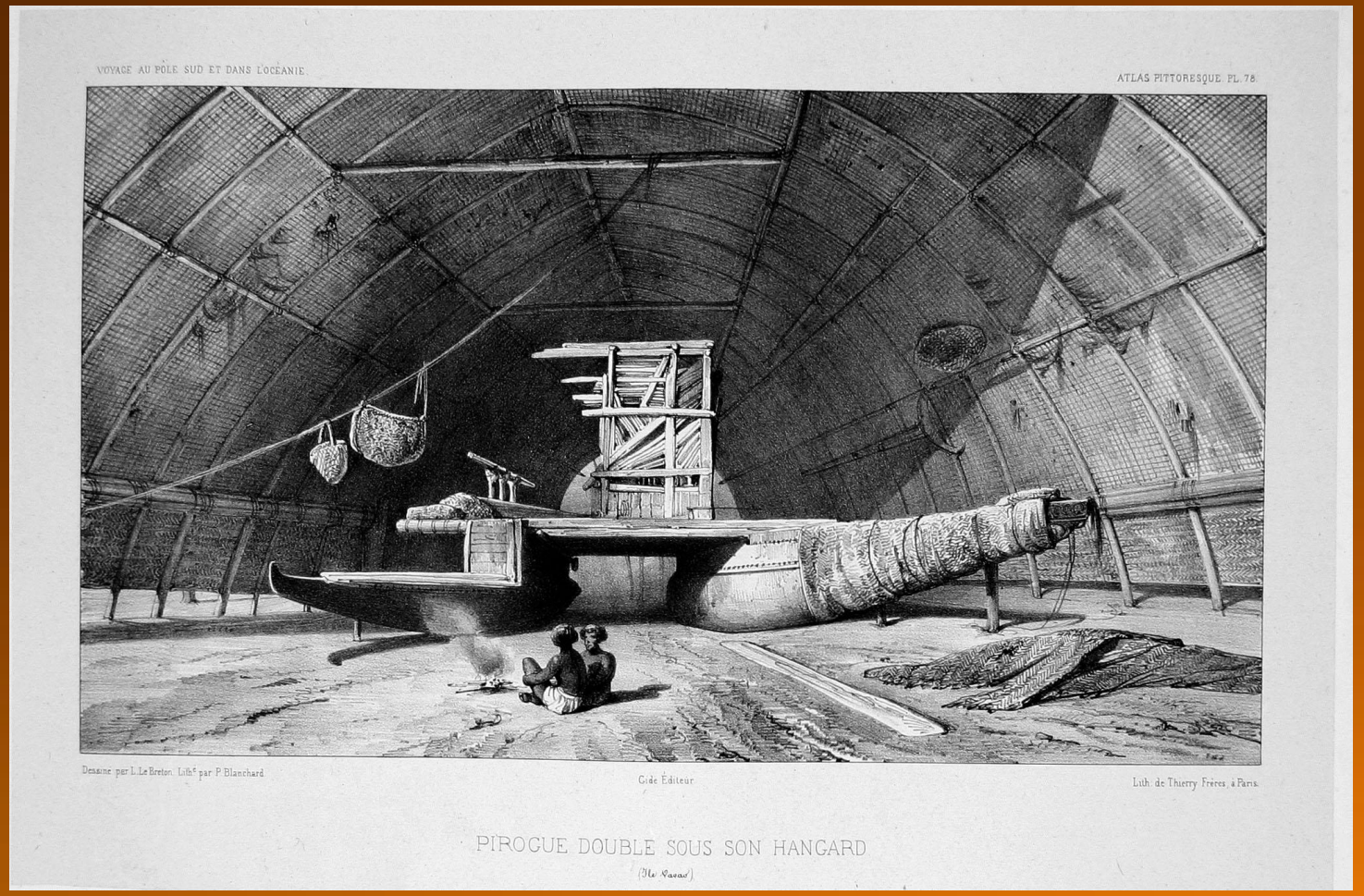
Reconstructing the *Drua*

Kaiafa Ledua



Drua Legacy


VOYAGE AU PÔLE SUD ET DANS L'OCÉANIE.
ATLAS PITTORESQUE. PL. 78.
Dessiné par L. Le Breton. Lith.é par P. Blanchard.
Gide Éditeur.
Lith. de Thierry Frères, à Paris.
PIROGUE DOUBLE SOUS SON HANGARD
(Ile Vavao)

Sailing Ability

Historians all agree that the Drua or Waqa Tabu (Sacred Ship) were:

- Finest and fastest blue water ships in existence
- They sailed nearer to the wind than any European vessel
- Largest sea going vessel built by natives of Oceania
- Pinnacle of Oceania canoe technology

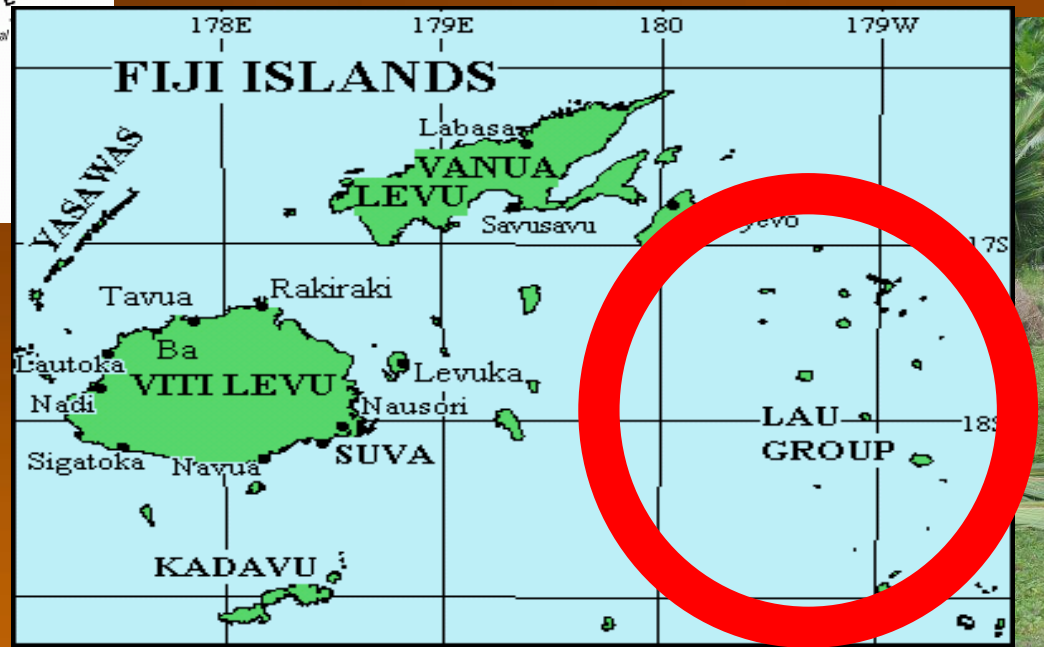
Vesi Loa – the titanium of the Pacific

Drua are built from a range of premium boat building timbers

The hulls are planked from *vesi loa* (Intsia bijuga)

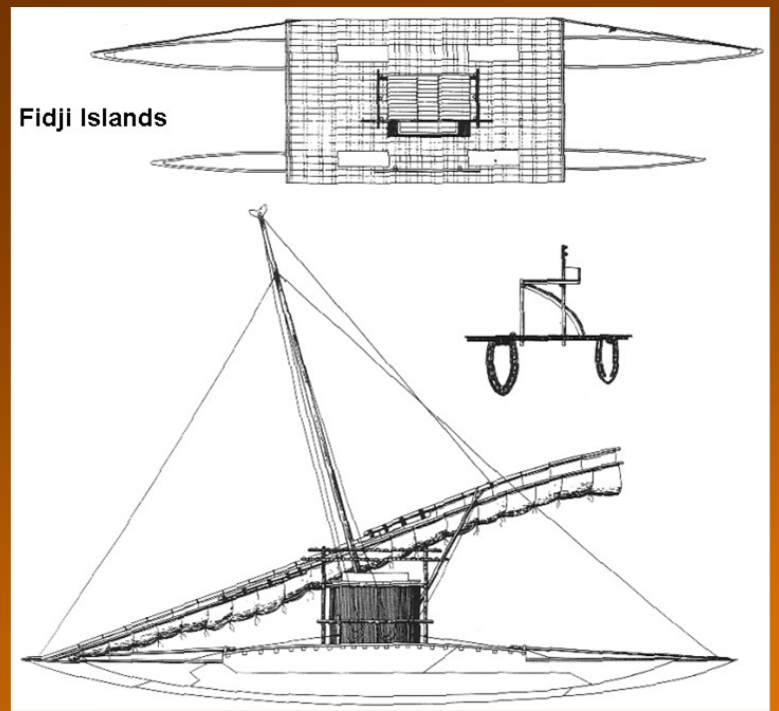
It grows only on the limestone islands of the Southern Lau Group

Fijian, Tongan, Samoan boat building clans were sent to live here



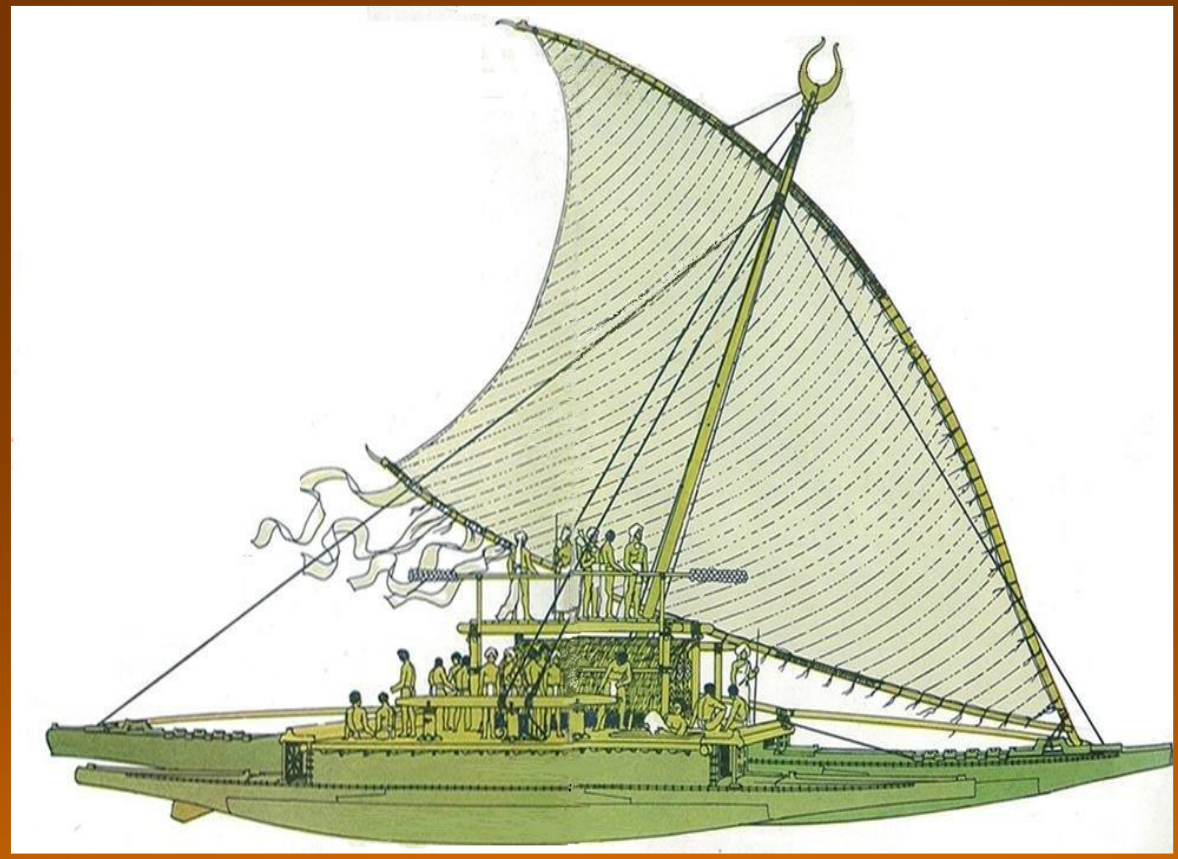
Design and Rigging

- There is still debate whether they are of Fijian, Samoan or Tongan design.
- Also there is debate over the origin of the unique rig, it may be Micronesian, Fijian or Tongan.
- But the Drua is evidence of an amazing relationship that connects all in the Central Oceania.



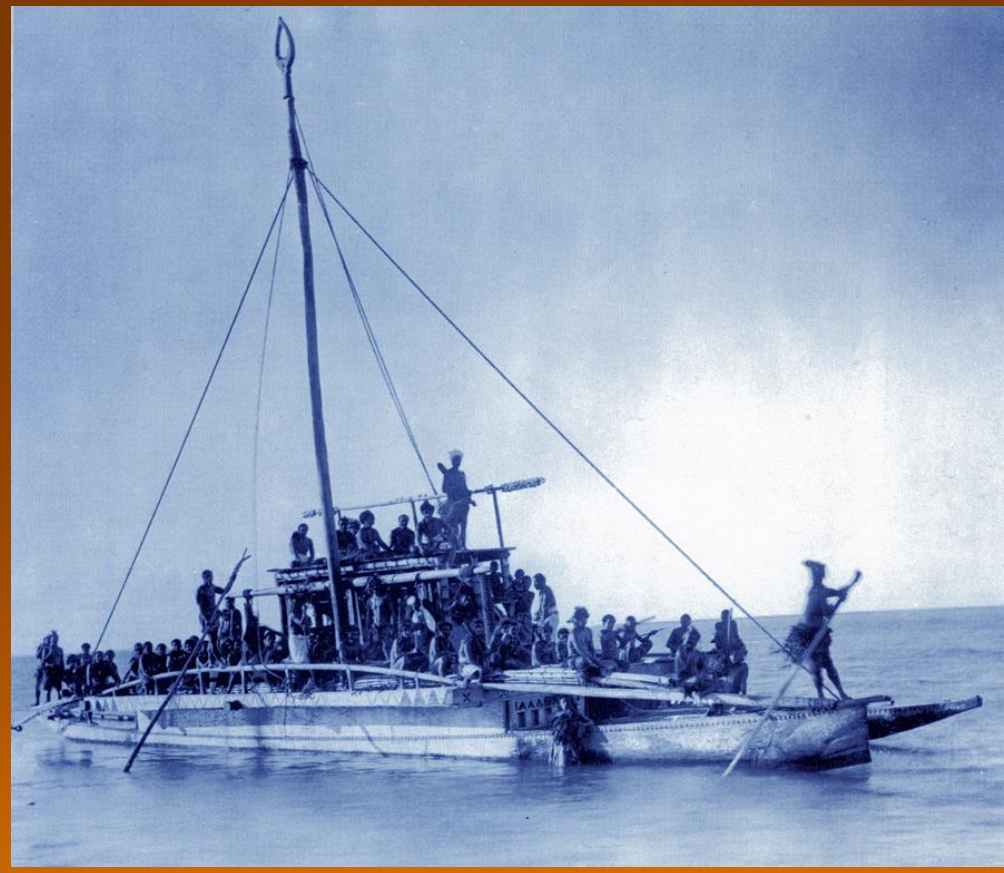
In War

- “high speed ramming machines”
- “fast blockade runners and enforcers”
- “carry up to more than 200 warriors”
- “armed with cannon after European contact”



Loading Capacity

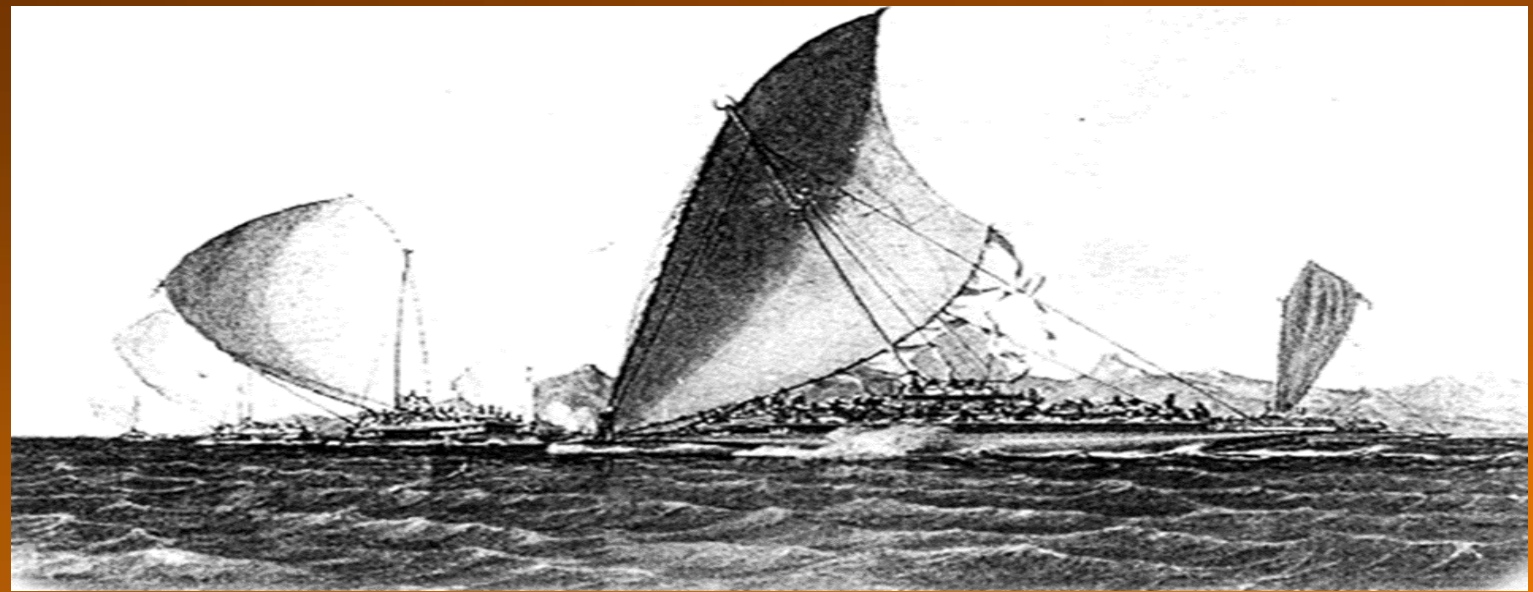
- Carry large loads
- “more than 300 passengers”
- “easily carry more than 10 cattle on a 100 mile journey”
- “food and water were easily stowed away for long voyages”
- “open cooking place can easily cater for roasting pigs”



Shipbuilding Industry in Oceania

Built in large numbers

- “an allied fleet (1808) consist of 150 large canoes”
- “a naval fleet from Bau (1830’s) consisted of more than 200”
- “Another fleet (1809) consists of 64 Drua,26 Tabilai fighting canoes, 10 Takia sailing canoes totalling 136 canoes transporting more than 2700 men”
- DRUA building was part of a major shipbuilding industry in Central Oceania



Archaeological Importance

- “the most valuable asset a chief could possess”
- “highly prized gifts/tributes to other chiefs”
- “Great chiefs were often buried inside their DRUA”
- We have knowledge of some of these burial sites

COULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT ARCHAELOGICAL SITE in the PACIFIC