



"LEGEND OF THE MAGIC BOX" – Fiji's Beginnings

The history of Fiji, according to mythology, begins about 1500 BC with a voyage of giant war canoes from Taganika north of Egypt. Leading the armada on the giant double hull canoe "Kaunitoni" was the able Seafarer warrior Chief Lutunasobasoba assisted by his General Degei.

Legend has it that the armada was carrying some special cargo - treasures from the Temple of King Solomon in Judah including a special box called the Katonimana ("Kato" meaning case and "Mana" being magic), which in Fijian literally means the "Box of Blessings".

The purpose was to find a mythological Island in the South East with bountiful seas and rich land created by the Gods where the Chief's people could rest after years of wandering. Navigation was by the evening stars. The armada carried rations, families, warriors and skilled craftsman including Lapita Potterers.

Two convoys set sail, but one got separated and disappeared in the Indian Ocean. The other continued South East past Indonesia, Papua New Guinea into the Marquesas, north of Tahiti, then curled back south west into the Fiji groups of islands.

Legend has it that the armada traveled via the Yasawas and as the reefs were treacherous around Vita Levu, they had to keep traveling South West to find a passage, an "opening" to enter the Fiji Waters. This passage was the Momi passage, which is still used today by large ocean-going vessels.

It was here around Matamanoa, Mana and Likuliku, that the giant outrigger canoe "Kaunitoni" with its special cargo, met inclement weather and high seas. Due to seas, the "Katonimana" - the "Box of Blessings" slipped off the outrigger canoe. Lutunasobasoba gave orders to let it go, believing it was the will of the gods. The General Degei tried to retrieve it but it was too late.

Lutunasobasoba then named the 3 Islands Mata-manoa ("Mata" means eye, "Manoa" means wind), which literally means "eye of the strong wind", the other island "Mana" means magic, to mark the area where the Box of Blessings fell, and Likuliku because it was here the armada experienced calm waters again.

The convoy finally landed at Vuda Point a beach 13km (8 miles) from Nadi airport on the big Island Viti Levu. The Chief Lutunasobasoba eventually settled in Vaturu, which is one of the high mountains you see outside Nadi Airport, and Degei eventually moved to Nakauvadra near Mount Victoria about 100km away (60miles).

Lutunasobasoba gave specific instructions that no one was to ever try and retrieve the "Katonimana" that was in the Mamanuca seas. The Gods made their decision clear that it was to remain in the Mamanucas, and anyone who tried to tamper with the box would be cursed. Lutunasobasoba also predicted that this group of islands would be a great source of prosperity for the Fijian people in the future.

Degei many years later returned to the Mamanucas to try and retrieve the box of blessings.

Legend has it that he only managed to retrieve a big diamond that was outside of the box. Immediately he was cursed and transformed into a snake with the diamond marked on his head for eternity. For the rest of his life he would crawl on his stomach, wearing a heavy diamond and be trapped in an ocean cave in Sawa-i-lau in the Yasawas (visitors can visit this cave today).

The Fijians believe that this box is still buried today in the oceans between Likuliku and Mana guarded by two giant clams. It is this box that they believe has brought great blessings to all the villages in the area and the people who visit the islands.

So if you enter the waters around Likuliku, keep an eye out for this special box.