



3055 BA SANGAM COLLEGE

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LESSON NOTES

School: Ba Sangam College

Year/Level: 9

Name: _____

Subject: Social Science

Week 14

Year: _____

Strand	Time, Continuity and Change
Sub Strand	History of Fiji (pre-contact to cession) 1800 – 1874
Content Learning Outcome	Explore the events that took place from pre-contact to cession and describe how the actions of individuals and groups during these events contributed to cession for Fiji's political development.

Chapter Two: Time, Continuity and Change

Unit One : History of Fiji

THE AMERICAN CLAIM

- Cakobau had ordered a ship from America and had hoped to use it to trade in bech-de-mer. The sum was not paid.
- 1849 – The house of a Johns Williams accidentally burnt during the celebration of America Independence Day on Nukulau Island.
- The Fijians, rather than putting out the fire, looted the house. Williams claimed that he had lost property valuing at £5000 pounds.
- 1853 – Levuka was burnt down by the Lovoni tribesman and many Americans were victims.
- 1855 – Williams house was burnt down again and again and he appealed to American government for help. This time the American claim grew from £5000 to £45000.
- 1858 – The U.S.S Vandalia came to Levuka and Cakobau was called on board. He was forced to sign a promise that would pay the debt, this time within one year.

THE FIRST OFFER

- Apart from his inability to pay the American debt, Cakobau was also worried over Ma'afu's growing power which had now spread to Beqa and Rakiraki.
- Cakobau approached the British consul, W.T.Pritchard with an offer to cede Fiji to Great Britain.
- Cakobaus conditions were; a. He should be allowed to keep the title Tui Viti b. Britain should pay the American debt in return for eighty- two thousand hectares of land (200,000 acres). Britain refused the offer
- Pritchard did not like the Tongan expansion in Fiji and also he was worried over the increased activity of German traders in the South Pacific.
- Pritchard went to England to urge the British government to accept the offer.
- He believed that Fiji could be important both as a naval base and as a centre of trade for ships going between Panama and Australia.
- On his return, he called a meeting of all leading chiefs, at which he persuaded Ma.afu to give up his claims in Fiji and to give back the lands he conquered.
- Ma'afu and the other chiefs agreed to the offer of cession and signed a document which promised protection for all Christians, the stopping of cannibalism and infanticide, and which recognized the rights of Europeans to hold land and to trade.
- Pritchard set up courts to resolve conflicts. This was an attempt to bring law and order into Fiji.
- Soon his work became unpopular due to poor decision making.

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BRITISH REACTION TO THE OFFER

- There was much support from outside Fiji to see that the British accept the offer. The Methodists of New South Wales were anxious to see law and order restored, the Wesleyan Missionary Society and the Aborigines Protection Society both strongly advised the British Government to accept the offer.
- The strongest pressure came from the cotton manufacturers who were interested about the prospects of new sources of raw materials.
- The Legislative Assemblies of both NSW and Victoria sent petitions to the British Government urging to accept the offer.
- They were worried not only over the lawlessness in the group but also over another power – the US or France taking possessions and be a threat not only to the safety of British ships in the South Pacific but also the security of Australia itself.
- Therefore Colonel W.J.Smythe was sent to Fiji in 1859 to investigate on the situation on :
 - a. Whether Fiji would be a useful port of call, for ships between Panama and Australia?
 - b. Whether the islands were suited for large-scale cotton production?
 - c. Would it be possible to stamp out the savage practices of the i-Taukei?
 - d. Would the acquisition of Fiji add to Britain's power in the South Pacific?
 - e. Could the scattered European settlement be maintained?
 - f. What was the system of land tenure in Fiji?
 - g. Would the Fijians readily sell land to the Government and to individuals?

THE SMYTHE REPORT

Dr Seeman, a famous botanist accompanied Smythe to Fiji to look into the possibility of growing cotton. Although Seeman made a favorable report about the 'cotton' that could be grown in Fiji Smythe thought otherwise. In his report he wrote the following;

- a. Cakobau had no claim to be King of Fiji and that the land he offered was not his and was doing it solely to escape the American debt.
- b. Fiji would not be useful as a port of call for ships going between Panama and Australia for it was a normal route.
- c. The waters around Fiji were full of reefs and were a danger to shipping.
- d. The cost of government would be high and there would be only a small income to pay for it.
- e. The Fijians themselves were mostly heathens and hard to control.

Follow-up Questions

i) Discuss the importance of the Smythe report. (2 marks)

ii) State why the offer was rejected (2 marks)

li) What was American claim. (1 mark)
