

**PENANG SANGAM HIGH SCHOOL  
P.O.BOX 44, RAKIRAKI  
LESSON NOTES**

**Worksheet 7**

**School: PENANG SANGAM HIGH SCHOOL**

**Year/Level: 9**

**Subject: Social Science**

**WEEK 20**

<b>Strand</b>	Time , Continuity and Change
<b>Sub Strand</b>	History of Fiji
<b>Content Learning Outcome</b>	Students should be able identify the reason for Colonel W.J. Symthe visit to Fiji.

### 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.

### THE OFFER REJECTED

As the result of Symthe's report, the British Government, in 1862, rejected the offer of cession. Pritchard was dismissed from his post and Fiji was now thrown in to a state of political turmoil.

### THE 1865 CONFEDERATION

The rivalry between Cakobau and Ma'afu was scaled down in 1864 when Ma'afu was threatened with possible intervention by the Americans if his actions prevented Cakobau from paying his debt. He decided to establish his rule as peacefully as possible.

The suggestion was taken up in 1865 by Captain Jones to form a Confederation which would rule over the whole group. After years before this experiments broke down- the chiefs lacked the experience in this type of government and the European secretaries who attached themselves to the individual rulers attempted to control through the interest of the planters.

### THE CONFEDERATION OF NORTH AND EAST

In place of the old Confederation two new governments sprang up. In the east, Ma'afu formed the confederation of the North and East, while the Kingdom of Bau was formed in the west by Cakobau.

Ma'afu introduced a new system of land holding in which individual allotments were made to each adult male in return for taxes of coconut oil. This proved to be effective and Ma'afu was quick to punish his subjects who did not make full use of their allotments. He deprived them of their land, often leasing it to Europeans and so profiting from the rents

### THE KINGDOM OF BAU

The constitution of the Bau Kingdom stated that Cakobau was to be king of all parts of Fiji not included in the Conference of the North and East. He could make his own laws, levy his own taxes and call meetings of chiefs when he wished. The constitution soon failed - when asked to pay taxes most settlers refused and soon there was no money in the treasury thus the Bau Kingdom failed.

### Short Answers

4. Why was Colonel W.J. Symthe sent to Fiji?

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## THE POLYNESIAN COMPANY

In 1868, an Australian group (the Polynesian Company) agreed to pay the American debt in return for a grant of land of the same size as that offered to the British in the first offer of cession. Cakobau also agreed to the following terms:

- Letting the company have full rights to make laws for i-Taukei and settlers in the land granted to them.
- The company was allowed to acquire the sole rights over currency and banking, customs duties and harbor charges, courts and trading activities in the kingdom
- That Cakobau would plant an area of land in cotton for the company
- Giving guarantee to assist the company to stay in Fiji.

J.B Thurston, the acting British Consul felt that the company was taking advantage of the situation Cakobau was in, and strongly opposed the terms and the amount of land the company would acquire. The company eventually paid the American claim but its great plans were never to come into being.

## THE LAST ATTEMPT

In the late 1860s as more Europeans settlers came, the search for a form of government became more intense. There was divided opinion among the Europeans as to what part the Fijians should play in any government. This made it difficult to find a suitable form of government. In March, 1869 another attempt was made to set up Cakobau as King. Again this failed because the Europeans would not pay the taxes and the British subjects could not be subjects both of Cakobau and the Queen. The attempt was weakened further when the traders at Levuka refused to support Cakobau. Meanwhile the labour traffic was increasing and there was a great deal of gambling and drinking among both the Europeans and the i-Taukei in Levuka. As a result, an attempt was made to set up a form of government in Levuka. It failed because it had no power to enforce its laws.

## KING CAKOBAU

- In Levuka, on 5 June 1871 Cakobau was again proclaimed King of Fiji.
- Although there was some form of objection to the new form of government all the chiefs including Ma'afu acknowledged Cakobau as King.
- The Constitution set up a Legislative Assembly, an executive cabinet of ministers (majority were Europeans ), with Cakobau as King and Ma'afu as Viceroy.
- It established freedom of worship, freedom of speech, fair justice and no slavery.

### Short Answers

5. Discuss the Colonel W.J. Symthe report

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## THE FAILURE OF CAKOBANU'S GOVERNMENT

By mid- 1873 Cakobanu's government collapsed due to the following reasons:

- A failure to reach agreement among the subjects of the kingdom on how much Fijian participation there should be in the government.
- Participation of Europeans in the government
- The Europeans in the government were not qualified either by experience or by character to govern the country
- Ministers spent money recklessly leaving the government in debt

In February 1873, the Burns family, who had settled on the Ba River were murdered by a mountain tribe threatened to break away from the government.

Economically Fiji was in a bad way. The price of cotton had fallen and many settlers were in difficult.

The Fijians were discontented.

The government ruled more in the interests of the settlers who regarded the Fijians as a source of cheap labor.

Fijians were sentenced to work for the planters if they failed to pay a poll tax.

In 1873 – Ma'afu threatened to leave the Kingdom after expressing his dislike of European control.

The government had failed to solve the planter's problems in the way that the planters would have liked them solved.

In January 1873, Thurston made another appeal to Britain asking if the British Government would consider annexing Fiji.

This time it was successful. Fiji was annexed in 1874.