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COURSE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTION

REVIEW OF CHAPTER 2

Nigeria came about from colonialism, it involved the pre-colonial era and colonial

period. Pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states,

kingdom and empires. Others include Hausa state and the Sokoto caliphate in the

North, Borno Empire, Benin Kingdom. We are bordered by Benin on the west, on

the north by Niger, east by Cameroon. Nigeria stretches roughly 700miles from West

to East and 650 miles from South to North. Man had settled in since the palaeolithic

period of 500,000-900,000BC Nigerians also took part in the stone age which is

divided into early, middle and late stone age. As man went on with life he hunted

for food to eat, made carving tools known as OLDOWAN TYPE TOOLS which got

its name from Tanazia, small stone tools used for hunting were located in Jos and

Iwo Eleru in Ondo state, a heavier tool was made known as Sagoan.

Men lived in remote areas like Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin known as ancient

Civilisation. Terracotta was discovered in Nok in 1936, Nok culture is believed to

have existed due to the transitional civilisation between stone age and iron age. Nok

culture existed between the 5th and 2nd century BC. Ife is known for its Terracotta.

quartz was used to make stool. Art historians believed that Ife art was gotten from

Nok culture because of their similarities in bead making also believed it’s from Ife

that Benin learnt bronze sculpture.

In Nigeria we have three major ethnic groups which are Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-

Fulani. The Yoruba is one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria we can trace the

origin to Oduduwa who is the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Oke Oramfe in Ile-

Ife is believed to be the centre from which the world was created. Oduduwa became

the ruler and was from that state. The Yoruba structure had an ’Oba’ who was the

ruler that lived in the palace called Aafin. The Oba is both the spiritual and political

head he has limitations to his power known as Eewo to curb tyranny and despotism

on the part of the king. If he violated it death would be his punishment. He has other

rulers who assist him with governing the people like the Baale and the Oloja. Each

town was divided into units or wards watched over by ward head known as Ijoye.

The pattern of administration was hierarchical. The Oyo Empire is an example of

the pre-colonial of the Yorubaland, the people were ruled by the Alaafin, he is

regarded as the companion of the gods known as Ekeji Orisa. The Oyomesi had the

power to remove the Alaafin when he is dictatorial. The head of the army is known

as the Aare –Ona – Kankanfo.

The Igbo people were acephalous in nature they were divided into five group the

Igbo of eastern Nigeria, Igbo of south eastern Nigeria, Igbo of north eastern Nigeria,

western Igbo and northern Igbo. The ancestor of Igbo according to Nri came from

the sky and arrived at Aguleri as their population increased their migrated to other

parts of Igboland to establish settlements. In Igboland there was no centralised

government they practiced democracy some socio political institution existed in each

village to perform the legislative functions institutions were created like the council

of elders, age grade, family and secret societies. The family was the smallest unit

which was headed by an Ofo title holder one of them was the senior known as the

Okpara who presided over council meetings. Oha-na-eze is a form of general

assembly which consisted the male adult members, the age grade were people born

at a particular time. The secret societies consisted of the diviners’ masquerades,

ubinuknabi they played significant roles they performed rituals to ward off evil or

appease the gods The Igbo believed in re-incarnation their religious lives were

surrounded by mysticism and superstitions.

The Hausa land is located in the northern part of Nigeria, it was made of fourteen

states divided into two groups which are Hausa bakwai and Hausa banzu. Oral

tradition originated from a man known as Bayajidda who killed a snake that

oppressed the people which he later married the queen. Islam was introduced to

Hausa in the fourteen century the Jihad war of 1804 strengthened it. Emirs were put

in place to rule at Sokoto and Gwandu to hold allegiance to Dan Fodio the emirs had

title holders who helped in ruling the sarkin fada, galadima, magaji, waziri, yari.

They followed a sharia law.

The British have been given credit for the creation of Nigeria but the Portuguese

were the first to arrive Nigeria through Bini kingdom. The Atlantic slave trade was

the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between Europeans and Africa it made

more importance in the 15th century. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the

unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria, they later

abolished it through British West African Squadron.

In 1900 Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British colonial office. The

first amalgamation in 1906 into Lagos colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria.

The second amalgamation was in 1914 the British amalgamated northern and

southern Nigeria, British governed Nigeria by Indirect rule which means by using

Local rulers of the society they left their way of life behind with us which we have

been following.