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ANSWER

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

INTRODUCTION

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The Nigerian state is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. Prior to the emergence of the Nigerian state, pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These ethnic groupings differ in their historical, social and cultural make-ups.

EARLY MAN IN NIGERIA

The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the Paleolithic period 500000-9000BC. The artifacts found by archaeologist mostly stone tools confirmed the Nigerians also took part in the Stone Age civilization.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF EARLY MAN

The man who lived in Nigeria worked hard to cope with his environment. He began to hunt the animals and to gather fruits as food. He soon began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Archaeologists called these tools Oldowan-type tools. Man advanced from the Stone Age and began to make axes. Early man then proceeded to invent another type of tool called a heavy chopper which was more efficient in cutting than existing tools. One of the most active periods of technological efforts was during the period, around 500BC to 200AD. During this period, there were people who lived in Nigeria who made sculptures. Many were of human heads and figures. The sites in which the figures were found was the village of Nok. The figures were made of terracotta. Forms of ground axes and similar stone tools, iron axes and tools, were also found on the sites.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY NIGERIAN SOCIETIES

MAJOR LANDMARK IN EARLY NIGERIAN HISTORY

Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past included: Nok, Igbo-Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilization.

NOK CULTURE/ CIVILIZATION: The discovery of a terracotta head of a monkey by tin miners in 1936 prompted more discoveries in other places such as Wamba, Katsina-Ala and Jema. The area where these terracotta figures were found is called Nok culture or civilization area.

BENIN CIVILIZATION: The craftsmen of Benin carved on wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass.. They cast wooden doors and ivory masks.

IFE CIVILIZATION: Ife is important for its terracotta and bronze heads. Objects such as tools and figures were carved on hard stone called quartz while animal and human figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails.

IGBO-UKWU CIVILIZATION: Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo-Ukwu in 1939.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTION IN PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA

The three major political ethnic groups of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani in Nigerian traditional political system of government shall be examined.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN YORUBA LAND

The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of the traditions of origin. In his book “History of the Yoruba” (1950), Johnson traced the origin of the Yoruba to the east. We also have the Oke Oramfe’s version of the origin of the Yoruba.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE PRE-COLONIAL YORUBA LAND

The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. Each town has a king known as Oba who resides in the palace called “Aafin.” The Oba enjoys many privileges but certain limitations known as ‘eewo” were designed to curb the tyranny on the part of the king.

OYO EMPIRE

The government of the old Oyo Empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yorubaland. The first organ of government in Oyo Empire was the king known as Alaafin of Oyo.

1. THE ALAAFIN ADMINISTRATION: In the 16th Century, Oyo was one of the rare empires that had inbuilt checks and balances and this contributed to its stability for centuries. The Alaafin was the fountain of authority and therefore regarded as the “companion of the gods,” (Ekeji Orisa). The Oyomesi had the power to remove any Alaafin especially when he appeared dictatorial or transgressed the laws of the land. Usually the deposed Alaafin was expected to commit suicide.

2. THE ARMY: Its head was conferred with the title of Are-Ona-Kankanfo. He was expected to live outside the capital. The army performed important functions which include stability of the empire, expansion and keeping dissident territories.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN IGBO LAND

The Igbo people are best known for their acephalous way of life because from ancient times, they had no centralized states. They operated a government without kings. One of the most popular versions of the migratory stories of origin of the Igbo people is the one that pointed to Israel. We also have the Nri version.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE PRE-COLONIAL IGBO LAND

They practiced direct democracy and or a decentralized system of government because there was no traditional ruler. Some socio-political institution existed to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions. Such institutions included the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.

Each family was headed by an “Ofo” title holder. Among the “Ofo” title holders, one of them was seen as the most senior to the others. He was known as the “Opara” who hold the Ozo title and presided over the council of elders meeting where issues affecting the lives of the people were discussed. The communities organized themselves through the age grade, for work, war and government. Those who were still youths cleared paths and public places, streams, and also served as police. The elders enforced the elder’s decision, and in war guarded the settlements and fought on the battlefield. The age grade enforced discipline and public morality. All the male adult members of Oha-na-eze usually met to perform legislative functions. This meeting was held in the open village square and their decisions were absolute and final. The secret societies acted as an intermediary between the living and its ancestors. They had chief priests who performed sacrifices from time to time to ward off evil spirits and appease the gods.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN HAUSA LAND

Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. Hausa before 1804 was made up of 14 states which were of 2 distinct groups: the “Hausa Bawkai” and “Hausa Banza.” Oral tradition attributed the origin of the Hausa State to a man named Bayajidda, an Arab prince who travelled to the Sahel from Baghdad.

POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE PRE-COLONIAL HAUSA LAND

The “Sarki” was known as the head of a typical Hausa State. He worked with a retinue of officials in a well-organized court. The Sarkin Kasar combined both political and religious functions.

EMIRATE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND THE HAUSA PEOPLE

Each of the Emir owed allegiance to Dan Fodio and his two representatives in Sokoto and Gwandu. The Sultans acted in advisory capacity and appointed Emirs over the emirates. The Emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate. The Members of the council was appointed by Dan Fodio and each held a title specifying the specific functions he performed. The judicial administration of Hausa-Fulani was based on the Islamic legal system called Sharia. Sharia courts were established throughout the emirates and each was headed by a trained Sharia Court Judge called Alkali.

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND INDIRECT RULE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Trans-Atlantic Slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria. After 300 years of shameful slave trade came the so-called legitimate commerce. This was another opportunity for the Europeans to get directly involved in the affair of the African states. In 1861, they took Lagos as a colony. But, the bulk of Nigerian territory was occupied in the late 19th Century. This happened through treatises that were signed with some Nigerian community leaders, and through military conquest of states and deportation of their rulers. As from 1898, the British government sought to establish and maintain a colonial state in Nigeria.

THE BIRTH OF NIGERIA AS A GEO-POLITICAL ENTITY

Tamuno (1980) observed that the 1906 amalgamation was purely economic, that is,” to use the better financial position of the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to cover the costs of administration and development in the financially weak colony and protectorate of Lagos, then saddled with the white elephant of a railway in need of extension since 1901.” The second amalgamation was that of 1914 between the Northern and Southern Nigeria. The principal reason for this is same as 1906. The Northern protectorate was not economically buoyant as the Southern. That is why, the British Imperial offices, since the Southern trade was booming, amalgamation would allow the surpluses acquired in the South.