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MATRIC NUMBER: 19/LAW/231

COURSE CODE: GST 201

DATE: NOVEMBER 29, 2020

ASSIGNMENT

An Historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigerian state in Salient Issues in Government and Nigeria Politics page 15-32.

The historical background of Nigeria government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The pre-colonial period is the period before the coming of the colonialists to Nigeria while the colonial period refers to the era that colonial administration was established in the country Nigeria.

The Nigerian state is a colonial creation, that is to say, it is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa, The pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, state, kingdoms and empires. These among others include the Borno Empire, Hausa state, and the Sokoto Caliphate in the North, the Igbo segmentary societies in the East, Benin Kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the West and other several ethnic identities in the Benue Valley, Futhermore, these ethnic groupings significantly differ in their historical, social and cultural make-ups.

The early man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archacological evidence from different part of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the Palacohthic period 500,000-9000BC.The excavation of a stone Age skeleton at two Eleru near Akure in Ondo state has thrown more light on the earliest occupation of Nigeria, and the skeleton was dated 12,000 years ago, and this suggests that the country has been long inhabited. : An Historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigerian state in Salient Issues in Government and Nigeria Politics page 15-32.

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Mayor landmark in the early Nigerian history, information on the major land was made possible through the excavating work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past, some of the places where man lived in Nigeria include Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others, they are referred to as centre of ancient civilization.

Benin civilisation: Benin was important due to its art work, the craft men of Benin carved wood and ivory and cast object in bronze and brass. The art historians claim that bronzo casting was introduced into Benin by an Ife artist.

Ife civilisation: They Ife are also important because of its terracotta and bronze heads. objects such as stools and figures were carved on hard stone called quartz while animals and human figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails, an example is Opa Oranmiyan in Ile-ife.

Igbo Ukwu civilization: Some of the bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939, which eventually led to the excavation of three sites in the area by an archacologist called thurstan shaw.

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

Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Yoruba land:

The Yoruba’s are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by language. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom and also the Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. And also the Oke Oramfe version of the origin of the Yoruba. It is believed that Oke Oramfe is located in Ile-ife the centre from which the world was created. According to the legend, there was a period when the world was covered by the water, the almighty God then decided to send some of his messengers to the world and they included Obatala or Orisa Nla or Orisa Alase and sixteen Oye they were given five pieces of iron, a lump of earth tied to a white piece of cloth and a cockerel. Somewhere on their way to the world, the leader Obatala got drunk with palm wine, Oduduwa seized the symbol of authority from him and eventually led the party to the world. The site which they landed is traditionally known as Oke Oramfe in Ile-Ife. On arrival at the site Oduduwa set down the five piece of iron and placed the lump of earth on them, the cockerel then spread the lump of earth with its feet throughout the earth, the earth was formed and Oduduwa, who became the ruler.

The political structures of the Yoruba kingdom were similar in nature. Each consist of a capital town, subordinate towns, village, and farmland and each kingdom has its own king known as Oba. The Oba enjoy so many privileges but certain limitations were placed on his power, this limitation known as ewo were designed to curb the despotism and tyranny on the part of the king. The king also had other rulers of lesser rank and status. The lesser rulers were in charge of the subordinate towns and wore crowns made of white beads known as sese ofun.

The 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, also the Oyo empire was very unique and exceptional in its system of government, for instance, in the sixteenth century. The Alaafin was assisted in his administration by a retinue of officials made up of priest, official and eunuchs, he had a well-organized court as well. The Alaafin was the head of the empire and was resident in the capital. Another one is the Ogboni cults administration. Apart from the Alaafin cabinet, members of the Oyomesi cult constituted another arm of government, it was a very powerful cult, it was composed of free and prominent members of the society as well as members of the Oyomesi. The Ogboni cult had a very vital position in Yoruba society. The Army; The army was another arm of government in traditional Yoruba society, it was well organized, its head was conferred with the coved title of Are-Ona-Kankanfo. the army was credited with performing important functions which include stability of the empire, expansion, as well as keeping dissident territories in check.

Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Igbo land. The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life, this is because from the ancient time they had no centralized state. The Igbo are grouped into five sub-cultures;

The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria, The Western Igbo and The Northern Igbo. The Igbo society has always been known as acephalous, also there is no equivalents of Oba and Alaafin or palaces over most parts of Igbo, this why it’s very difficult to reconcile all this various version. In Igbo traditional society, there was no highly centralized authority but instead they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups. The smallest political unit in Igbo traditional society, each family was headed by Ofo title holder, and the family sees itself as having one ancestor. the secret society consisted of the diviners masquaredes, Ubinuknabi at Arochukwu, the Amadisha of Ozuzzu and so on all this play a significant role in Igboland.

Historical background of pre-colonial political system in Hausa land; Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria. Hausa land before 1804 was made up of fourteen states, and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consist of seven state called Hausa Bakwai state, that is Hausa legitimate state. The second group consist of the remaining seven state and were known as Hausa Banza state that is Hausa with legitimate state. Emirate system of government among the Hausa people.