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Assignment

In about 3-page review Chapter two, “ An Historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigeria State” in Salient issues in Government and Nigeria’s Politics.

An historical analysis of the evolution of the Evolution of the Nigeria state

 The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. Before the emergence of Nigeria, pre-colonial Nigeria was made up of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These different ethnic groupings significantly differ in their historical, social and cultural make-ups.

Early man in Nigeria

Nobody is sure of the exact time when man began to live in Nigeria. But some archaeological evidences have shown that man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the Palaeolithic period in 500,000-9000BC. The artifacts, mostly stone tools, found confirmed that Nigerians took part in the stone-age civilization. The Stone Age is divided into three periods; the early Stone Age, the middle stone age and the late Stone Age.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. He had to find food so he began to hunt the animals and gather fruits. He also began to invent tools, consisting of pebbles. He began to make hand axes which he supposedly used for hunting and it is said that they have been found in Jos and Iwo Eleru. Also, he invented another tool called a heavy chopper which has been found in Sango Bay and Sokoto state.

There was a more advanced technology during the bronze and metal age and the people who lived in Nigeria at that period made sculptures. They were human heads and figures which varied in size. The size in which the figures were found was the village of Nok.

The Scientific and technological Development of Early Nigerian societies

Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very past include:

* Nok Culture/ Civilization- This was a terracotta head of a monkey and was discovered by miners in Nok in 1936. The Nok culture is believed to be a transitional civilization between the Stone Age and the Iron Age in Nigeria. The Nok culture existed between the 5th and 2nd century B.C.
* Benin Civilization- in Benin, the c raftsmen carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass.
* Ife civilization- Here, they produced terracotta and bronze heads. Objects such as stools and figures were carved on hard stone called quartz while animal and human figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails. Historians believe that Ife art originated from the Nok culture and they also believed that it was from Ife that Benin probably learnt bronze sculpture.
* Igbo ukwu civilization- bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939 this led to the excavation of three other sites. Many objects made of bronze were found and the sites excavated at Igbo Ukwu have been dated to the middle of the 9th century A.D.

Traditional Political Institutions in Pre-colonial Nigeria

Yoruba

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. The origin of the Yoruba people have different versions but the most common one is the one that involves Obatala and Oduduwa in Ile-Ife and this is called the Oke Oramfe’s version.

Each town in Yoruba had a king called Oba who was both the spiritual head and political head of the kingdom. He is the supreme authority in the kingdom but had certain limitations. The king had other rulers of lesser rank and status like the Baales and the Olojas. The pattern of administration was hierarchial and at the lowest level were the compound heads which are the Baale.

The Oyo Empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yorubaland. This was made of the Alaafin administration, the Ogboni cult’s administration and the Army. The Alaafin was the head of the empire and was resident in the capital. His powers were however limited by the Oyomesi, a council of seven members headed by the Bashorun. They were also the Ogboni cult that played a role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. The army was headed by the Are-Ona-Kakanfo which was saddled with responsibility of stability of empire, expansion and keeping territories in check.

Igbo

The Igbos were segmentary or acephalous because they had no centralized states. The Igbos are grouped into five sub cultures.

One of the most popular versions of origin is the one that points to Israel.However, the most authentic version of its origin is the Nri version.

The Igbos practiced direct participation and decentralized system of government. Some socio-political institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions, such institutions which include the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.

The family was the smallest political unit in Igbo traditional society. Each family was headed by an ‘Ofo’ title holder. Among the Ofo title holders, one of them was recognized as the most senior to others and he was known as the Okpara who held the Ozo title and looked over the council of elders meeting where issues affecting the lives of the people were discussed.

The age group grew from childhood and took a common name to commemorate an event associated with the time of their birth. Different responsibilities were given to different age groups like the youths and the elders.

Ohanaeze was a form of general assembly in traditional Igbo society which performed legislative functions.

The secret societies consisted of the diviners’ masquerades which acted as intermediary between the living and the ancestors. The religious lives of the Igbos were surrounded by mysticisms and superstitions.

Hausa

Before 1804, Hausa land was made up of fourteen states of two distinct groups; the Hausa Bakwai states, Hausa legitimate seven states and the Hausa Banza states, Hausa illegitimate seven states. The origin of the Hausa states where attributed to a man named Bayajidda.

The Sarki was the head of any typical Hausa state. Sarkin Kasar was the title given to any effective head of Head of Hausa State.

Islam was however adopted and this gave birth to many new political institutions.

Colonial administration and indirect rule system in Nigeria

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through the Bini kingdom. The Atlantic slave trade was the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between the Europeans and Africans.

The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century after the Berlin conference. Britain colonized Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia and Sierra-Leone in West Africa. As from 1898, The British government sought to establish and maintain a colonial state in Nigeria so they imposed colonial rule on Nigerians

The Birth of Nigeria as a Geo-political Entity

By 1900, the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British colonial office. The very first amalgamation was in May 1906 where the British government amalgamated Lagos colony and protectorate with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the new colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The second amalgamation was the one in 1914 where the British government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria headed by Sir Frederick Lugard.

Britain governed Nigeria through an indirect rule which a system of ruling her colonies through local traditional rulers.