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ASSIGNMENT

In about 3 pages, review chapter 2: “An historical analysis of an evolution of the Nigerian state” In salient issues in government and Nigeria’s politics. Pages 15-32

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE

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. Pre-colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires. These among others, include the Bomo Empire, the Hausa states and the sokoto caliphate in the north, the Igbo segmentary societies in the East, Benin kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the west and several ethnic identities in the Benue valley. The country is bordered to the south by the bights of Benin and Biafra, which are on the gulf of guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. On the west, Nigeria is bordered by Benin, on the north, by Niger and on the east by Cameroon .Nigeria stretches roughly 700 miles from west to east and 650 miles from south to north, covering an area between 3 and 15 degree E longitude and between 4 and 14 degree N latitude.

The exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria. The artifacts, mostly stone tools, found by archaeologists further confirmed that Nigerians also took part in the Stone Age civilization. These are: Early Stone Age 3,000,000-35,000BC, middle Stone Age 35,000-15,000BC and late Stone Age 15,000-500BC. The excavation of a Stone Age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state has thrown more light on the earliest occupation in Nigeria. The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. Firstly, he needed food. For this purpose, he began to hunt the animals and gather fruits. He began to invent tools, archaeologists called the tools the Oldowan-type tools. Because this type of tool was first identified by the archaeologists in the Olduva Gorge in Tanazia. Early man in Nigeria advanced from the early Stone Age and began to make hand axes. These tools which were oral and pointed in shape also had a cutting edge. These tools seemed like they were used for many purposes by the man. Similar tools had been located earlier by archaeologists who worked outside Nigeria at a site in St Achuel in Northern Nigeria. Small stone tools believed to be used for hunting and have been located in Jos, plateau state and in Iwo eleru in Ondo state. Early man invented another type of tool, which is a heavy chopper. It was more efficient in cutting than existing tools. The type was first seen at Sango bay on the west shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda, East Africa. One of the most active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria was during this period, around 500BC to 200AD.

Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past included: Nok, Igboukwu,Ife and Benin among others. They are usually referred to as centers of ancient civilization. The nok culture is believed to be a transitional civilization between the stone and the Iron Age in Nigeria because of the presence of a combination of stone and iron objects. Benin was also important for its art work. The craftsmen of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Ife is important because of its terracotta and bronze heads. An example is Opa Oranmiyan in Ile-ife. Some bronze objects and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo ukwu in 1939. The sites excavated at Igbo ukwu have been dated to the middle of the 9th century AD. The Yoruba’s are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and are united by language. The Yoruba came from the North- eastern area of Africa. Oduduwa is believed to be the first leader that led the Yoruba to Ile- Ife. The almighty God 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. The government of the old Oyo Empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land. Oyo Empire was the king known as alaafin of Oyo Empire was very unique and exceptional in its system of government.

The alaafin was the head of the empire, and was resident in the capital. He was also regarded as “Lord of many lands”. The alaafin was assisted in his administration by a retinue of officials made up of priests, officials and eunuchs. Apart from the alaafin cabinet, members of the Oyo mesi cult constituted another arm of government. The ogboni cult had a very vital position in Yoruba society. The army was another arm of government in the traditional Yoruba society. Very organized, was conferred with the coveted title of Are- ona- kakanfo. It was made up of infantry and cavalry. The army was credited with performing important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion, as well as keeping dissident territories in check. Oyo Empire also had provincial governments. They were administered by princes, minor kings and bale. They were subject to the over lordship of the alaafin. The provisional governments enjoyed considerable autonomy. But the alaafin had personal agents, Ilari all over the provinces. The alaafin used the bere annual festival periods to acknowledge the renewal of allegiance of the provincial governors to him. The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. This is because, from the ancient times, they had no centralized states.

The Igbos 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, the northern Igbo.

The Igbo society has always been known as acephalous. Moreover, there were very limited professional, historians as at that period. People believe that the Igbo people had been in their present abode from the beginning. Igbo is the original homeland. In the Igbo traditional society, there was no highly centralized authority. In other words, they practiced direct democracy and/ or a decentralized system of government. The family was the smallest political unit in Igbo traditional society. Each family was headed by an “ofo” title holder.Oha-na-eze was a form of general assembly in traditional society. As a democratic society, the life of every individual was highly respected. Hard working and wealthy individuals were respected and given important responsibilities in the society as well. The secret societies consisted of the diviners’ masquerades, “Ubinuknabi” at Arochukwu. They all played significant roles in the Igbo traditional society. The official religion practiced in pre-colonial Igbo land was the traditional religion. They had chief priests who performed sacrifice from time to time to appease the gods. The religious lives of the Igbos were surrounded by mysticisms and superstitions.

Hausa land is located in Northern Nigeria, before 1804 was made up of fourteen states and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consists of seven states called “Hausa Bakwai” states; that is, Hausa legitimate states. The second group consists of the remaining seven states which were known as “Hausa banza” states. The Hausa “bakwai” states are the Dawa, Biram, Zaria, katsina, Kano, rano while the Hausa “Banza” states are Nupe, gwari, yauri, bauchi, zamfara, kebbi, Yoruba.

The sarki was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. He worked with a retinue of officials in a well-organized court. The emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate; he was the political, administrative and spiritual leader. The important holders of the emirs cabinet included: Sarkin fada (The spokesmen of the emir and organizer of palace workers), waziri( The prime minister of the emirate), Galadima( The administrator of the capital city), madauaki( The commander and head of the emirate army), magaji(Government treasurer in charge of the government treasury, Sakin dan doka(Inspector general of police force called dan doka), Sarkin ruwa(Minister in charge of water resources or the river fishing official), Sarkin Pawa( Head of chairman of butchers at the abattoirs), Yari(Chief superintendent of prisons in the emirate). The May 1906 amalgamation is known as the first ever amalgamation of the British in Nigeria. The second amalgamation was that of 1914.