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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTION ( GST 203)

**Review chapter2 (An historical analysis of the evolution of the Nigeria state).**

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The precolonial 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 country is bordered by Benin, on the north, by Niger, and on the east, by Cameroon. In its extreme north eastern corner, lake chad separates Nigeria from the country of chad. Nigeria stretches roughly 700 miles from west to east and 650 miles from south to north, covering an area between 3 and 15 E longitude an d between 4 and 14 N latitude.

**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 Palaeolithic period 500,000- 9000BC. The artefacts, mostly stone tools, found by archaeologists further confirmed that Nigerians also took part in the stone age civilisation. The stone age can be divided into several periods. 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 scientific and technological development of early Nigeria societies.**

**Major Landmark in early Nigerian history**

Information on the major landmarks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past. 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 civilisation. The history of these centres of ancient civilisation presents us with the scientific and technological developments of early Nigerian societies.

* NOK culture/ civilisation
* Benin civilisation
* Ife civilisation
* Igbo UKWU civilisation

**Traditional political institutions in precolonial Nigeria.**

In this section, the three majority ethnic groups of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa- Fulani in Nigeria traditional political system of government shall be examined.

**Historical background of precolonial political system in Yoruba land.**

The Yoruba 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. Ile Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are different versions of the traditions of origin. The Yoruba originally came from the north eastern area of Africa with them the east is mecca and mecca is the east. It is from Egypt, after several years of journey that the Yoruba finally settled in Ile Ife in Nigeria. Oduduwa is believed to be the first leader that led the Yoruba to Ile Ife and subsequently sent his sons grandsons to found other Yoruba kingdoms.

**The 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** : Oyo empire was very unique and exceptional in its system of government. For, instance in the sixteenth century, Oyo was one of the rare empires that had in-built checks and balances and this contributed to its stability for s=centuries. The Alaafin was the head of the Empire, and was resident in the capital. He was also regarded as lord of many lands.
2. **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. It played a mediatory role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. It was a kind of counter power to the Oyomesi as well.
3. **The Army:** the army was another arm of government in traditional Yoruba society. It was very organised. Its head was conferred with the coveted title of Are-Ona kankanfo. It was made up of infantry and cavalry. The Are-Ona kankanfo was expected to live outside the capital. The army was credited with performing important functions which included stability of the empire.

**Historical Background of precolonial system in Igbo land**

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. This is because from the ancient times, they had no centralised states, consequently, they operated a kind of government without kings. 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
* The northern Igbo

**Political structure of the precolonial Hausa land**

The SARKI was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. He worked with a retinue of officials in a well organised court. Sarkin Kasar, which means ruler of the land was the full title given to any effective and efficient head of Hausa state. The Sarkin Kasar combined both political and religious/ spiritual functions. He was also a council of state. At the district level, the government was modelled after that at the national level.

The members of this council were project officers appointed by Uthman Dan Fodio and each held a title specifying the specific functions he performed important title holders in the emir cabinet included:

1. SARKIN Fada; The spokesman of the emir and organiser of palace workers.
2. Waziri: The prime minister of emirate
3. MADAWAKI: the commander and head of emirate army.
4. GALADIMA: the administrator of the capital city
5. MAGAJI: government treasurer in charge of the government treasury
6. SARKIN Dan Doka: inspector general of police force called Dan Doka
7. SARKIN Ruwa: minister in charge of water resources or the river fishing official
8. SARKIN Pawa: head of chairman of butchers at the abattoirs
9. YARI: chief superintendent of prisons in the emirate.