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Government and political institution (GST 203)

A review of chapter two (2)”an historical analysis of the evolution of the Nigerian State in “Salient issues in government and Nigeria’s Politics.

The Nigerian historical background of government and politics involves both the pre-colonial and the colonial period. The Nigerian State is a colonial creation. It is a product of of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with it’s eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. The Nigerian pre-colonial comprised of different independent Chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires, these among others include the Borno 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.

The time when man lived in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidence from different parts of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region long ago since the Palacolithic period 500,000-9000BC.The artifacts, mostly stone tools which further confirmed that Nigerians tool part in the Stone Age civilization that lasted from 3,000,000-5000BC. The excavation of a Stone Age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state.

Men lived in remote areas like Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin known as ancientCivilisation. Terracotta was discovered in Nok in 1936, Nok culture is believed tohave existed due to the transitional civilisation between Stone Age and Iron Age. Nok culture existed between the 5th and 2nd century BC. Ife is known for its Terracotta. Quartz was used to make stool. Art historians believed that Ife art was gotten from Nok culture because of their similarities in bead making also believed it’s from Ife that Benin learnt bronze sculpture. In Nigeria we have three major ethnic groups which are Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani. The Yoruba is one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria we can trace theorigin to Oduduwa who is the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Oke Oramfe in Ile-Ife is believed to be the centre from which the world was created. Oduduwa became the ruler and was from that state. The Yoruba structure had an ’Oba’ who was theruler that lived in the palace called Aafin. The Oba is both the spiritual and political head he has limitations to his power known as Eewo to curb tyranny and despotism on the part of the king. If he violated it death would be his punishment. He has other rulers who assist him with governing the people like the Baale and the Oloja. Each town was divided into units or wards watched over by ward head known as Ijoye. The pattern of administration was hierarchical. The Oyo Empire is an example of the pre-colonial of the Yorubaland, the people were ruled by the Alaafin, and he is regarded as the companion of the gods known as Ekeji Orisa. The Oyomesi had the power to remove the Alaafin when he is dictatorial. The head of the army is known as the Aare –Ona – Kankanfo.

The Igbo people were acephalous in nature they were divided into five group the Igbo of eastern Nigeria, Igbo of south eastern Nigeria, Igbo of north eastern Nigeria, western Igbo and northern Igbo. The ancestor of Igbo according to Nri came from the sky and arrived at Aguleri as their population increased their migrated to other parts of Igbo land to establish settlements. In Igbo land there was no centralized government they practiced democracy some socio political institution existed in each village to perform the legislative functions institutions were created like the council of elders, age grade, family and secret societies. The family was the smallest unit which was headed by an Ofo title holder one of them was the senior known as the

Okpara who presided over council meetings. Oha-na-eze is a form of general assembly which consisted the male adult members, the age grade were people born at a particular time. The secret societies consisted of the diviners’ masquerades, ubinuknabi they played significant roles they performed rituals to ward off evil or appease the gods The Igbo believed in re-incarnation their religious lives were surrounded by mysticism and superstitions.

The Hausa land is located in the northern part of Nigeria, it was made of fourteen states divided into two groups which are Hausa bakwai and Hausa banzu. Oral tradition originated from a man known as Bayajidda who killed a snake that oppressed the people which he later married the queen. Islam was introduced to Hausa in the fourteen century the Jihad war of 1804 strengthened it. Emirs were put in place to rule at Sokoto and Gwandu to hold allegiance to Dan Fodio the emirs had title holders who helped in ruling the sarkin fada, galadima, magaji, waziri, yari. They followed a sharia law.The British have been given credit for the creation of Nigeria but the Portuguese were the first to arrive Nigeria through Bini kingdom. The Atlantic slave trade was the trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between Europeans and Africa it made more importance in the 15th century. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria, they later abolished it through British West African Squadron. In 1900 Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British colonial office. The first amalgamation in 1906 into Lagos colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria. The second amalgamation was in 1914 the British amalgamated northern and southern Nigeria, British governed Nigeria by Indirect rule which means by using Local rulers of the society they left their way of life behind with us which we have been following.

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