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Assignment: In about a 3 page review Chapter 2 “An historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigerian state.

The historical background of Nigerian 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 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 5000-9000BC.

The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. First, he needed food. For this purpose he began to hunt his animals and to gather fruits. But he soon began to invent tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Archaeologists called the tools the Oldowan-type tools. There is evidence of more advanced technology in various parts of Nigeria during the bronze and metal age.

Information on the major land marks in early Nigerian history was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in the very remote past. The discovery of a terracotta head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok in 1936 prompted more discoveries in other places such as Wamba, Katsina-Ala and Jema. Benin was also important for its art work. The craftsmen of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Art historians claim that bronze casting was introduced into Benin by an Ife artist. Ife art originated from the Nok culture because of similarities in the two, especially beaded neck, wrist and ankles.

The three majority ethnic groups of Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria traditional political system of government.

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. It is believed to be the centre from which the world was created. The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands. Each town has a king known as “Oba" who resides in the palace called “Aafin". The oba is both the spiritual and political head if the kingdom. He is the supreme authority and his words are laws and binding on everyone.

The government of the old empire is a typical example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land. The Alaafin was the head of the empire, and was resident in the capital. He was regarded as the “Lords of many Lands” and was assisted by a retinue of priest officials and eunuch. The Alaafin was the fountain of authority and was regarded as the companion of the gods. Sometimes, he had an autocratic tendency but his powers were often limited and regulated by the Oyomesi (Kingmakers) and Bashorun (Prime Minister). The Ogboni Cult had a very vital position in the Yoruba Society. It was a very powerful cult that were composed of free and prominent members of the society. This cult played a mediatory role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin.

The Army was very organized and was headed by Are-Ona-Kakanfo. The army was credited with performing important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion as well as keeping dissident territories in check.

The Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life because they had no centralized states and they operated a kind of government without kings. The Igbos are grouped into five sub-culture namely; The Igbo of the Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of the South-Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of the North-Eastern Nigeria, The Western Igbo and The Northern Igbo. One of the most popular versions of the migratory stories of the origin of the Igbos is the one that points to Israel. There are assumptions in the similarities between the Igbos and the Ancient Hebrew. In the Igbo traditional society, there were no highly centralized authority but instead they had diffusion of authority into different groups. They practiced direct democracy and a decentralized system of government because they had no traditional rulers. Although, there was no highly centralized authority, some socio-political institutions existed in each village to perform Legislative, executive, administrative, military and judicial functions. These institutions included the Family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.

The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria were however not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria through the Bini Kingdom. The Atlantic Slave Trade became very important in the 15th century during the arrival of the Portuguese. It was the slave trade carried across Atlantic Ocean between the European and Africans. The struggle among the European powers for colonies led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century and the scramble for Africa, by these European powers led to the partitioning of Africa after the Berlin Conference of 1884-85.

The May 1906 amalgamation is known as the first amalgamation of the British who amalgamated Lagos colony and the Southern protectorate without the consultation of Nigerians. The reason for this 1906 amalgamation was purely economic. The second amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Nigeria occurred in January 1914 for the reason as that of May 1906. The British governed through a system known as the **“Indirect Rule”.**  Indirect Rule is the system of Britain ruling her colonies through local traditional rulers. The British officers defined the framework of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to the local personnel or the rulers.