**19/LAW01/002**

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**GST 203**

**GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA**

**QUESTION:**

In about 3 pages, review chapter two “AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE” in “SALIENT ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA’S POLITICS”. Pages 15-32

**ANSWER:**

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The colonial period was when colonial administration was established in the country Nigeria while pre-colonial Nigeria comprised of several different independent traditional systems whereas the current Nigerian state is a colonial creation.

The exact time when man appeared in Nigeria is unknown but archaeological evidence from different parts of Nigeria show that man lived in modern day Nigeria during the Palaeolithic period (500,000- 9000BC). A stone age skeleton was found at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo State which shows that the country has been long inhabited. To cope with the harsh environment, the early man who lived in Nigeria invented chopping and cutting tools from pebbles. Early man progressed to the middle stone age and made sharper, more trimmed tools that seemed to perform a variety of functions. Later early man invented a heavy chopper, the most efficient cutting tool of the time.

There are various scientific and technological development of early Nigerian societies. And these are marked by the various landmarks in early Nigerian history. Information on these landmarks was made possible through the excavation work done on places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past. The civilizations in which man lived in this very remote past include; Nok civilization, Benin civilization, Ife civilization and Igbo Ukwu civilization.

Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani and Igbo are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria, share a common language and ancestry. One version of the history of the Yoruba is that they originate from north-eastern Africa before a migration, led by Oduduwa, to Ife occurred. There is also the more traditional belief that Ife is the centre from which the world was created by the almighty god through immortals. The political systems of the Yoruba kingdoms were hierarchical and similar with each town having a king called “Oba”. The government of the old Oyo empire is a typical example of precolonial administration in Yorubaland.

The Igbo people are known for their acephalous style of life. Hausa land is located in northern Nigeria. The head of the Hausa people has both political and religious functions. Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the fourteenth century and was fully accepted as the religion of the ruling class in the fifteenth century. A centralised political system of government was introduced after the Jihad led by Uthman Don Fodio between the Fulani and Hausa ended.

Before colonialism, the first Europeans to land in Nigeria were the Portuguese through Bini Kingdom. The Atlantic Slave Trade was the slave trade carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between the Europeans and Africans. This era was quickly followed by the era of colonialism.

Before the year of 1900, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were under their original administration but 1900 saw Nigeria under the responsibility of the British Colonial Office. The first amalgamation of the British in Nigeria occurred in 1906 where the colony and protectorate of Lagos was joined with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the new colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The second amalgamation happened in 1914 when Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated. Britain governed Nigeria though local traditional rulers, a system popularly called indirect rule.