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Assignment

An historical analysis of the evolution of Nigeria 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 Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventures with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. Before the emergence of Nigerian state the pre colonial Nigeria comprises of different independent states, kingdoms and empires such as the Oyo Empire, Borno Empire, Sokoto Caliphate, Benin Kingdom and other various ethnic groups in the Benue valley.

Early Man in Nigeria

The exact time when man began to line 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 now known as Nigeria since the palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC. It has also been found that Nigeria took part in the Stone Age and achieved in the creation of many things such as;

- Oldowan type tool : created with pebbles and made for chopping and cutting things,
- Hand made axes;
- Heavy chopper

One of the most active period of of technological efforts in Nigeria was during this period, around 500BC to 200AD. During this period thre were

people who lived in Nigeria who made sculptures using the various techniques of the Nok culture, Benin civilization, Ife civilization, Igbo Ukwu civilization and others.

Traditional political institutions in pre- colonial Nigeria

The three major ethnic groups of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa shall be examined.

Yoruba:

The Yoruba is one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria. They can trace their origin to Oduduwa who is the founder of th Yoruba kingdom known as Ile- Ife which is the ancestral home of the Yoruba people.

The political structure of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consist of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages, and framland. Each town has a king known as 'Oba' who resides in the palace called Aaron. The Oba is the spiritual and political head of the kingdom. He is the supreme authority in the kingdom and his word are laws and binding on everyone. Example of a Yoruba kingdom is Oyo Empire, which as it following organ of government:

- The Alaafin Administration: the Alaafin was the head of the empire and was resident in the capital. He was also regarded as the “ Lord of many lands” . The Alaafin was assigned in his administration by a retinue of officials made up of priests, officials and eunuchs. He had a well organized court .
- The Ogboni Cult's Administration: apart from the Alaafin cabinet, members of the Ogboni cult are another arms of government. It is a powerful cult and composes of free and prominent members of the society as well as the oyomesi .
- Tha Army: the head of the army is called Ona- Kankanfo. The army is made of infantry and cavalry. It was credited to preforming important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion, as well as keeping dissident territories in check.

Igbo

The Igbo people were best known for their segmentary way of life . This is because from ancient times, they had no centralized states. They operated a kind of government without kings.

As they had no centralized authority they instead had a diffusion of authority into different groups. In other word they practiced decentralized system of government. Although there was no highly centralized authority, some socio political institutions existed in each of the villages to perform legislative, administrative, military and judicial functions, such institutions include the family, council of elders, age grades and secret societies.

The family was the smallest political unit which is headed by an “ Ofo” title holder. The family sees itself as one common ancestor. The household also see themselves as belonging to one family thus having a common father. Age grades was organized on the village basis. The association grew from childhood and took a common name to commemorate an event associated with the time of their birth.

The secret societies consist of the diviner’s masquerades, Ubinuknabi of Amadisha and so on. They play a significant roles in the Igbo traditional society. They are the intermediary between the living and the ancestors. They performed rituals at different shrines intended to ward off evil and or appease the gods and goddesses, when ever they are anger.

Hausa

Hausa land is located in northern Nigeria. The Hausa land before 1804 was made up of 14 states and are divided into seven legitimate states which are Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Rano and Gobir and the seven illegitimate states 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. Sarkin Kasar , which means ruler of land, was the full title given to any effective and efficient head of Hausa state. He is both a political and spiritual leader but this all changed in 14th and 15th centuries where the government system took another shape through the adoption of Islam which gave birth to many new political institutions such as Dogari, Galadima, Yari Sarki, Sarki Yau and so on.