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MATRIC NO: 19/MHS01/357

DEPARTMENT: PHYSIOLOGY

COURSE CODE: GST 203

In about 3-pages, review Chapter two ‘An Historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigerian State’ in the Salient Issues in Government and Nigerian Politics.

The pre-colonial and colonial period in Nigeria make up the historical background of the Nigerian government and its politics.

The pre-colonial period is the period before the coming of the colonist, while the colonial period is the period that the colonial administration was established in Nigeria. Before the emergence of the Nigerian State, the pre-colonial Nigerian comprised of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms, and empires; these include the Borno Empire, Hausa states and Sokoto caliphate in the North; the Igbo segmentary societies in the East, Benin kingdom and Oyo Empire in the West. These ethnic groups significantly differ in their historical and cultural makeups.

EARLY MAN IN NIGERIA

The particular time man started living in Nigeria is unknown, but archaeological evidence from different parts of the country has shown that for a fact Nigeria participated in the stone-age civilization. The stone-age period can be divided into several periods, the early stone age (300000-35000 BC), middle stone age (35000-15000 BC), and late stone age (15000-500 BC).

The Achievement of the Early Men

The ancient Nigerian man worked hard to survive in his environment. His primary needs were basically food and shelter so he had to start farming and hunting, hence, he began to invent various tools from pebbles and wood. There are more evidences of advanced technology in Nigeria during the bronze and metal age. During this period people made different tools and sculptures and they all possessed a distinctive artistic style.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY NIGRIAN SOCIETIES

Major Landmark in Early Nigerian History: Information was gotten by the excavation done on the places where man lived in Nigeria. Some of these places are: Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others. They are usually referred to as centres of ancient civilization.

Nok Culture/ Civilization: The discovery of a terracotta head of a monkey in 1936 made way for more discoveries. The areas where these terracotta figurines were found is called the Nok civilization area. This culture is believed to be a transitional civilization between the stone and iron age.

Ife Civilization: Ife is known for its terracotta and bronze heads. Objects were carved on hard stones (quartz) while human figures were carved from granite and decorated with iron nails. It is believed that Ife art originated from the Nok culture due to their similarity. It is also believed that Benin learnt bronze sculpture from Ife.

Igbo Ukwa Civilization: Some objects were accidentally discovered in Igbo Ukwa in 1939. This led to the excavation of three different sites by an archaeologist Thurstan Shaw.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA

Historical Background of Pre-colonial System in Yoruba Land

The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Oduduwa, Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There are various versions of the traditions of origin.

The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms are similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinates towns, villages and farmlands. The pattern of administration was hierarchical. The Oyo Empire is an example of the pre-colonial administration in Yoruba land. Their hierarchical leadership is thus:

The Alaafin Adiminstration: this is made up of the: Alaafin, the priests, officials and enuchs.

The Ogboni Cult Admknistration: made up of the Oyomesi cult and other constituted arms of government.

The Army

Historical Background of Pre-Colonial Political System in Igbo Land

The Igbo people are assumed to have migrated from Israel but the most popular version of their origin is that of Nri. In the Igbo society there is no centralised authority, hence, direct democracy or decentralised system of government is practiced. 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 group and secret societies.

The family was the smallest unit of leadership in the Igbo tradition and it was headed by a titled man ‘Ofo title’. The age grade was next and it was organised on a village basis, the association grew from childhood and took a common name to commemorate an event associate with the time of their birth. The elders among the age grade enforced decisions, settled issues and fought on the battle field. The council of elders formed the core of the village administration. The secret societies consisted of masquerades, diviners and they served as an intermediary between the ancestors and the living.

Historical Background of Pre-colonial Political System in Hausa Land

Hausa land was made up of fourteen states before 1804, and they were made up of two distinct groups- the legitimate states (Hausa Bakwai) and the Illegitimate states (Hausa Banza). The Hausa people traced their origin to an Arab prince ‘Bayajidda’ who travelled from the Baghdad to the Sahel. The supposed place where Bayajidda found the Hausa people is called Daura.

Sarki is known as the head of any Hausa state. He combined both spiritual and political duties, he was also the chief executive of the state but he was aided by a council of state. Between 14th and 15th century, the administration of the Hausa kingdom took another course as Islam was adopted and many political institutions were adopted.

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND INDIRECT RULE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

Historical Background

The British government were not the first to set their foot in Nigeria, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive Nigeria but their aim was for slave trade. They were the chief customers of the so-called legitimate human trade. It was during this period of slave trade that the British government got in contact with the Nigerian state. They decided to abolish the slave trade after three centuries of slave trade in the Western Africa. They introduced a system of government called the ‘Gun-boat’ politics. This gave the British government the opportunity to formally colonise Nigeria. Lagos was taken as the base colony. From 1898 the British government sought to establish and maintain a colonial state in Nigeria, to achieve this so many measures like the removal of any visible opposition, expansion of the British authority.

The Birth of Nigeria as a Geo-Political Entity

Nigeria was still under their individual administrations before 1990 but by 1990 the British colony was responsible for the whole country. The first amalgamation took place in 1906 and the aim of the amalgamation was purely economic.

The second amalgamation was in January 1914, this time the British government amalgamated the southern and northern protectorate. The principle aim of this second amalgamation was the same as the first one. The northern protectorate was not as buoyant as the southern protectorate, hence the amalgamation. Lord Frederick Lugard was the one who initiated the amalgamation. The Britain government hence ruled the Nigerian state through indirect rule. The British government defined the frame work of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation for the local rulers.