NAME: ESE-EJAKPOVI UYOYOGHENE

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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATES

The periods in the evolution of Nigeria includes; pre-colonial period, colonial period and post-colonial period.

Nigeria is a colonial state i.e. the pre-colonial period before the coming of our colonialists. Nigeria was made up of Chiefdoms, states, empires and kingdoms, which includes the Benin kingdom, Oyo empire, the Sokoto caliphate.

To the south of Nigeria, Benin and Biafra are located on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean. To the West is Benin, the East Cameroon, the North Niger. The distance from the West to the East is approximately 700 miles, while from the south to the north is 650 miles which has a longitude 30 and 150E and latitude 40 and 140N. it was discovered that Nigeria took part in the stone age through the artifacts and small tools that were found. The Paleolithic era 500,000-9000BC. The early stone age: 3,000,000-35,000BC, the middle stone age: 35,000-15,000BC and the late stone age: 15,000-5000BC.

The various discovery of artifacts, first started when archaeologists discovered some chopping and cutting tools which are known as Olduwan tools which were found in Olduvian Gorge at Tanzania.

The achievements of the early man include:

1. To hunt and gather food.
2. Invention of tools. The use of pebbles for chopping and cutting.
3. Sculpture making.

The figures were of ground stone axes and smaller stones tools, irons, axes and tools found in Nok, Ile-Ife, Jebba, Esie, Igbo Ukwu and Benin. The most active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria was during this period, around 500BC to 200AD.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY NIGERIAN SOCIETIES

The major landmark of Nigeria, where artifacts were found across the various parts of the country are known as “civilization areas or areas of civilization/ centers of ancient civilization”.

NOK CULTURE / CIVILIZATION

The discovery of terracotta (burnt clay) head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok in 1936 prompted more discoveries in other places. Such as Wamba, Katsina-Ala and Jema. It is believed that it existed between the 5th and 2nd century BC. They made mainly stools, humans and animal sculptures using stone and iron objects. They are said to have taken part in the stone to iron age.

BENIN CIVILIZATION

They carved objects using wood, ivory and cast objects in Bronze and Brass. Bronze casting was introduced by an Ife artist. An example is the ivory mask that was used as a symbol in FESTAC in 1977.

IFE CIVILIZATION

The objects were carved and were cast in Bronze. It is said that the Ife art is synonymous to that of the Nok art, because they used terracotta and they used beads around the wrists, neck and ankles. Objects such as stools and figures were carved on hard stones called “quartz”.

IGBO UKWU CIVILIZATION

The excavation of artifacts was established when an archaeologist Thurstan Shaw found an artifact in a pit toilet. It was found in 1939, where other artifacts were found in burial chamber, a pit, a compound wall. Decayed skeletons were found which was believed to be that of a king and 5 slaves, in the 9th century AD.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN PRE-COLONIAL NIGERIA

There are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria which include; Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE YORUBA

The history of civilization is traced down to Oduduwa, who is believed to be the leader that lead the Yoruba people from Mecca which is in the East, to their cradle of civilization which is Ile-Ife. There are other versions of civilization of the Yoruba people.

THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE PRE-COLONIAL YORUBA

Yoruba land, was divided into the central town, subordinate town, villages and farmlands, with their various appointees to watch over different segments. The palace is known as “Aafin”. The Oba is known to wear a beaded crown (Ade), slippers (Bata), scepter (Ase) and horsetail (irukere). He was the head of both religious and political affairs but was restricted to an “eewo”. The rulers of the village and farmlands was known as Baale and Oloja. Each town was divided into smaller units and their head where “Ijoye”.

THE OYO EMPIRE

The head of the Oyo empire, is known as the “Alaafin”. He is appointed by a council of seven chiefs known as the “Oyo Mesi”. They regulate and check on the activities of the Alaafin. Also, a secret cult known as the “Ogboni” oversees the activities of both the Alaafin and the Oyo Mesi. The Are-ona-kankanfo is known as the head of the army in Yoruba land.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN IGBO LAND

The Igbos are grouped into 5 sub-branches;

1. Western Igbo
2. Northern Igbo
3. Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria
4. Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria
5. Igbo of Eastern Nigeria.

The Igbo people, are said to be segmentary or acephalous in nature. Such that they do not have a central head or an Oba. The various duties to be carried out in a community, settlement of disputes are shared amongst different individuals based on their status, age etc. they have cross cutting ties through which duties are shared amongst individuals and information is gotten;

1. The age grade
2. Women society
3. Secret society
4. Council of elders
5. Council of chiefs.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN HAUSA LAND

Hausa land, is made up of 2 main states which can be divided into the legitimate and illegitimate states which includes Hausa Bakwai; Daura, Gobir, Biram, Kano, Rano, Katsina and Zaria. And the Banza Bakwai; Zamfara, Jukun, Kebbi, Yauri, Gwari, Bauchi and Nupe. The Hausas have an ancestral father Bayajidda from Baghdad, who found the Hausa states with his seven sons.

The Hausa states, are divided into emirates with Emirs as their head with different other individuals with titles to support the Emir which includes; Waziri, Galadima, Sarkin fada, Madawaki, Sarkin pawa, Sarkin ruwa etc. serious cases were solved at the alkali courts, which used sharia laws.

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION AND INDIRECT RULE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

In the 15th century, prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, the demand for slaves could be traced to the introduction of plantation of agriculture in places like Brazil, Jamaica, and Haiti among others. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was abolished in the 19th century. In 1861, they took Lagos as a colony. Also, in May 1906 the first amalgamation in Nigeria was that of Lagos colony with the Southern protectorate of Nigeria. It was said that this occurred mainly because of economic issues. And the second amalgamation was that of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, with the same reason as given above.