AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE.

GST 203

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Introduction.**

The evolution of the Nigeria state can be divided into two, pre-colonial period and colonial period. These period are the only historical background of the Nigerian state, government, and politics. Nigeria is a state that has suffered the creation of their state by colonial European states, this phases of colonial rules in Nigeria destroyed the traditional, cultural, and moral core of the nation. Before the emergence of the colonial rule invasion embarked on Africa, Nigeria comprised of kingdoms, empires, emirates, and chiefdoms for independent ethnic groups like, the Borono empire, the Hausa states and Sokoto caliphate in the north, Igbo seminary societies in the east, the Benin kingdom and the Oyo empire in the west and several ethnic figure in the Benue valley. among these indigenous Nigerian tribes was a division, difference, uniqueness by history, social and cultural way of life, language, make up, political administration, beliefs etc. Nigeria is estimated to reach about 700 miles from west to east and 650 miles from south to north covering an area between 3o and 15o E longitude and 4o and 14o N latitude if stretched.

**PRE-HISTORIC INDIGINS ON NIGEIAN SOIL**

Archaeological evidence from different parts of Nigeria pointed to facts that man had been existing in Nigeria since Paleolithic period 500,00 – 9000 BC. Some artefacts were recovered by First inhabitants of the Nigerian land and confirmed that early settlers in what is now known as Nigeria took part in the stone Age civilization. The excavation of a stone age skeletons at Iwo Eleru near Akure, Ondo state has displayed more evidence that dated 12000 years ago. In other to survive early Nigerian settlers began to invent tools using pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools to hunt. Archeologists called the tools the “Oldowan” type tools because it was first discovered in the olduvai gorge in Tanzania. Other tools too were invented like axes, spares these tools were oval from both ends, they were mostly used cutting and hunting, proof of findings has been located in Jos, plateau, state and Iwo Eleru in Ondo state. Another tool for the purpose of cutting is the heavy chopper. There is evidence of more findings of advanced technology from the early settlers during the Bronze and metal age. One of the most active periods of technological efforts in Nigeria was during this period around500BC to 200AD. Early Nigerian settlers participated in rich self-expressed Art like, sculptures and drawing on walls mostly making figureheads and figures varied by size. The figure was made of terracotta and they all possessed a distinctive artistic style. Some of the places where man lived in Nigeria in the very remote past included the NOK, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin among others they are referred to as the “centers of ancient civilization”. These were the major land marks of early Nigerian history.

**NOK CULTURE/ CIVILISATION.**

The Nok culture used terracotta to mold heads of monkeys. It was discovered by tin miners in 1936. The area where these terracotta figures were found is called Nok civilization. It is believed to be the transitional civilization between the stone age and iron age. The Nok culture has been dated back to the fifth and second century BC.

**BENIN CIVILISATION.**

Benin was the creative center of the early man civilization. The craftsmanship of Benin carved in wood and ivory cast objects in bronze and brass. One of their pre historic artifacts called the ivory mask was used as the Festac symbol in 1977.

**IFE CIVILISATION.**

In 1939 some bronze objects and ornaments were discovered while accidentally, digging a toilet a toilet pit. Some other discovery of many objects were found buried among various sites including the remains of decayed skeleton which was suggested to be those of a king and five slaves buried along him. Igbo ukwu civilization was dated middle of the nine century AD.

In the pre-colonial era large and major ethnic groups had a traditional political administration in which they use to enforce order, some of the major ethnic groups are the Hausa- Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba kingdom. These ethnic groups were largest and most recognized groups that were in Nigeria. Some of the system of rule they used are as follows:

**HAUSA LAND.**

Northern Nigeria land before 1804 was made up of 14 states and they were of two district groups. Hausa bakwai and Hausa banza states. Hausa bakwai consist of Daura, Biram, Zaria, Kastina, Kano, Rano and Gobin while the Hausa banza consisted of Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, kebbi. Islam was introduced to the region in the fourteenth. The Hausa traditional political system of administrate was the most effective, because it was a traditional and religious system of rule. The Sarkin kasar (sarkin), was known as the head of any typical Hausa state. Meaning “Ruler of the land”. The sarkin performed spiritual and executive functions.

Between the fourteenth and fifteenth century Islamisation of Hausa land was inputted and adopted. The socio political organization of Hausa states took another shape when the the islamisation of the northern Hausa states were complete and effective it gave birth to many new political institute, it also influenced a new judicial system. It also brought forth the sharia law as as an arm of judicial authority. Jihad Dan fodio led the conquest of the existing old Hausa kingdoms and overthrow the leaders replacing them with Fulani Emirs, these Emirs enjoy absolute monarchy, and was both the religious and political leader, he also controlled the economic activities. The basic political organizations were not replaced but instead improved upon. The practiced an emirate system of rule. The north was divided into two confederations, the sultan supervised the administration in the emirate system. The emirs were also assisted by a number of title holders in the emirate north system, Sarkin ruwa, Sarkin Pawa, yari. The villagers were taxed by the emirate so appointed hakimi (village head). The judicial system of the north is the sharia laws headed by a trained judge called Alkali.

**THE IGBO GROUPS**

The Igbos from ancient times didn’t have any centralized states. They operated a kind of government without a central king, The Igbo groups are grouped into 5 sub-groups.

* The Igbo of the eastern Nigeria.
* The Igbo of the south eastern Nigeria.
* The Igbo of north eastern Nigeria.
* The western Igbo and
* The northern Igbo

The Igbo’s have been rumored to be a departed group of Israelites, because their cultures have similarities. Different origins stories have been told about how the Igbo people came to be but professor M.A Onwujeogwu (2000) regards the “nri” version as the only authentic version of origin in existence in the oral tradition of the Igbo. In the Igbo traditional system there was no highly centralized authority like the Yoruba’s but instead they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups. In other they practiced direct democracy. Socio political institutions existed in each village to perform legislative, executive, administration, military and judicial functions. The units of institutes include, family, council of elders, age grade and secret societies.

**Family**.

The family is the smallest unit in the Igbo tradition, it is headed by the Ofo title holder, the family household see themselves as belonging to one heritage and bloodline. In the Igbo culture having sons were very important because women were not entitled to inheriting property, among the son’s responsibilities differ, and more responsibility lies on the shoulders of the first son known as the ‘okpara’. Families come together in meetings to settle issues of common interest as brothers.

**Age Grade.**

The Age grade system was a system use to group the Igbo’s according to their ages, Age groups are organized for village basis. The Igbo community organized themselves age groups for work, war, roles in the society and government. The youth age grade cleared part ways, public places, streams and served as police. The elder age groups enforced decisions and settled disputed and fought on the battle field. They collected fines from offenders seniority was of great social importance. Age grade system did not only enforce discipline among themselves but also guarded public morality. The age grade system gave every individual a responsibility to uphold to.

**Secret Societies.**

The secret societies consisted of the diviners, masquerades, deities etc. these play roles in the society and acts as the intermediary between the living and the ancestors. They perform rituals and sacrifices and intend to ward off evil from their land by appeasing their deities and departed ancestors. The chief priests serve as the link between the people and the deities as well as their ancestors. The chiefs and elder consult their deities before any decision is imposed on the people. The Igbos respect their deities.

**THE YORUBA KINDOMS.**

The Yoruba’s are one of the largest group in Nigeria, their origin was traced to Oduduwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. The political structure of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature, they consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages, and palaces called “Aafin”. His paraphernalia of office included; Ade (A beaded crown), Bata (slippers), Irukere (horse tail) and Ase (scepter). The Oba (king) is both the spiritual and political head of the kingdom, the oba settled matter against families and land disputes. His words are the laws and biding to everyone. His monarchial power was limited by the “eewo”. The eewo is designed to prevent the despotism and tyranny from the king. Violating the eewo by any king is punishable by death. The political government and administration were divided into subordinate towns led by the lesser rulers wearing sese ofun (white beaded crowns). The villages were led by the Baale and the olaja was the leader of the farmlands. Each town was divided into smaller units to facilitate smooth administration. The units were headed by wards known as “ijoye”. The words were in turn sub divided into agbo-ile. Under the agbo-ile (compound heads) each compound was a group of patrilineal related people known as the idile.

The chiefs advised the king and served as links between between the crown and the wards. The Oyo empire was an example of the Yoruba kingdoms administration. The alafin was the head of the empire, he was regarded as the “the lord of the land” he was assisted by the priests, eunuchs, and other officials. The alafins power was often limited and regulated by the Oyemesi, a council of seven members headed by the Basho run. The Ogboni cult was very vital in the Yoruba society. It played a mediatory role in any conflict between the oyemesi and Alaafin. The army of the Yoruba kingdom was headed by the Are-ona-Kankanfo. the army was credited with performing import functions including stability, expansion, warfare at keeping dissident territories in check.

**THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION & INDIRECT RULE IN NIGERIA.**

INTRODUTION.

It should be noted that the British were not the first European country to land in Nigeria. In fifteenth century the demand for slaves was high due to the introduction of plantation system of agriculture in the places like Brazil, Jamaica and Haiti among others. The Atlantic slave trade began and this lead to first arrival of Portuguese slave traders (ruy de sequoia) through Benin kingdom in 1472. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the unfortunate channel that first put the British in contact with Nigeria. The slave trade era was a dark age for Africa states, the trade turns to maturity in the sixteenth century, villages and kingdoms were invaded and held captive by the British. and lasted for three centuries. Until the period of legitimate commerce, this was another was for the British to penetrate in the Nigerian state, for economic and territorial interest.

After three centuries of shameful slave trade, and the British already began to take over the Nigerian state, there were a lot of resistance by the kingdoms and Age groups against other European states that wanted to take over their kingdoms the British intervened as a helping hand but had ulterior motives but the Nigerian states couldn’t fight off the other states with their guns and weapons. The first strategy the British inserted was the “Gun – boat” politics. The British began to mark territories for Nigerian states, they took Lagos as their colony. The British began to mark out territories to fight off other European countries that where looking to colonies. The struggle led to the partitioning of Africa among them in the 19th century. Each of the European powers were given the opportunity to establish colonies in the Berlin conference. Then the British colonized Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, sierra Leone in west Africa. By 1900 the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British. The British amalgamation of May 1906 was the first of its kind. The British rule through indirect rule, using the kings and indigenous people of a culture to pass information. It was a system of Britain ruling her colonies through local traditional rulers. The British officer defined the frame work of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to local personnel or the rulers.

**CONCLUSION**

The Nigerian states was traditional and lived the way their ancestors lived but the European power were power thirty and year ahead of the African state and pursue interest and territory. The Europeans manipulated and destroyed cultural values and pre historic identities that were destroyed or stolen by the powers claiming it as finds. The African continent if left alone would have caught up with the mechanical era because traces of intelligence can be traced down their early Nigerian man who expressed artistic creativity. The colonization of Africa influence corruption, division, military rule, battery, bad governance.