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MATRIC NUMBER: 19/MHS01/346

DEPARTMENT: MBBS

COURSE CODE: GST 203

COURSE TITLE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Chapter 2

This chapter, “An Historical Analysis of the Evolution of the Nigerian State,” by Olayinka Olabimpe Ojo gives an insight into the history of development in Nigeria by speaking on colonization, early man in Nigeria and their achievements; the scientific and technological development of early Nigerian societies; the traditional political institutions in pre-colonial Nigeria; and the colonial administration and indirect rule system in Nigeria.

1. Starting with the early man and his achievements, the exact time when man began to live in Nigeria is unknown but there are archaeological evidences from different parts of Nigeria which pointed to the fact that man had settled in the region now known as Nigeria since the Paleolithic period 500,000 – 9,000BC. The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. First he needed food then he started making tools to get by. Firstly, pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools, which later advanced to making hand axes, which were later refined, and then the heavy chopper, which was more efficient in cutting than the already existing tools.

In addition, the traditional political institutions in pre-colonial Nigeria was also essentially focused on by examining the traditional political systems of the three majority ethnic groups, Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. As for the Yoruba, the political structure of the pre-colonial Yoruba land, majorly focusing on the old Oyo empire, is emphasized. There were three organs of government, including the Alaafin administration, the Ogboni cult’s administration, and the army. The Alaafin was the head of the empire, and was resident in the capital. He was also regarded as “lord of many lands” and “companion of the gods,” (Ekeji Orisa). His powers were often limited by the Oyomesi, a council of seven members headed by Bashorun, who acted as the prime minister. The Ogboni cult, however, played a mediatory role in any conflict between the Oyomesi and the Alaafin. On the other hand, the army was credited with performing important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion, as well as keeping dissident territories in check.

Moving on to the historical background of Pre-colonial political system in Igbo Land, the text points out how they are known for their acephalous way of life. The Igbo are grouped into five sub-cultures including the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria; the Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria; the Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria; the Western Igbo; and the Northern Igbo. They had no traditional ruler but were diffused into smaller groups. These smaller groups include the family, the age grades, the oha-na-eze, and the secret societies.

The Hausas, however, operated the emirate system of government. There was an introduction of a new system of selecting and appointing rulers described as emirs to rule the caliphate after Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the fourteenth century. The whole of the former Hausa kingdom was divided into two confederations. The Sultan supervised the administration of the emirate system, he arbitrated in disputes within and between emirates. Meanwhile, the Emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate, he was the political, administrative, and spiritual leader. Important title holders in the Emir’s cabinet included Sarkin Fada, Waziri, Galadima, Madawaki, Magaji, Sarkin Dan Doka, Sarkin Ruwa, Sarkin Pawa, and Yari.

Other last aspect focused on was the colonial administration and indirect rule system in Nigeria, under which the historical background and the birth of Nigeria as a geo-political entity were addressed. These and all that were previously explained give the perfect historical analysis of the evolution of the Nigerian state.