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MATRIC NO: 19/MHS06/006

DEPARTMENT: MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE

COURSE CODE: GST 203

DATE: 28TH NOVEMBER, 2020

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIA STATE

The historical background of Nigerian government and politics involves the pre-colonial period and the colonial period in Nigeria. The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. It is a product of a historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. 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 Palaeolithic period 500,000-9000BC. The artefacts, mostly stone tools, found by archaeologists further confirmed that Nigerians also took part in the stone-age civilization. The excavation of a stone-age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state has thrown more light on the earliest occupation of Nigeria. The man who lived in Nigeria during those years worked hard to cope with his environment. He invented tools consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools. Archaeologists called the tools the Oldowan-type tools. There is evidence of more advanced technology in various parts of Nigeria during the bronze and metal age.

Some major landmark in early Nigerian history are; nok culture/civilization, which talks about the discovery of terracotta (burnt clay) head of a monkey by tin miners in Nok. The area where these terracotta figurines were found is called the Nok culture or civilization area. Another one is Benin Civilisation, who were known for their arts work. The crafts men of Benin carved in wood and ivory and cast objects in bronze and brass. Art historians claim that bronze casting was introduced into Benin by an Ife artist. Ife is important because of its terracotta and bronze heads. In Igbo-Ukwu civilization, some bronze elements and ornaments were accidentally discovered while digging a toilet pit at Igbo Ukwu in 1939. This eventually led to the excavation of three sites in the area by an archaeologists called Thurstan Shaw. The sites excavated at Igbo Ukwu have been dated to the middle of the 9th century A.D. The historical background of pre-colonial political system in Yoruba land: the Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic group in Nigeria and are united by language. The Yoruba people trace their origin to Odudwa who was the founder of the Yoruba kingdom. Ile-Ife is regarded as the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. Oke Oramfe is located in Ile-Ife. It is believed to be the centre from which the world was created.

The political structures of the Yoruba kingdoms were similar in nature. Each consisted of a capital town, subordinate towns, villages, and farmlands. Each town has a king known as "Oba who resides in the place called "Aafin". The king also had other rulers of lesser rank and status. The lesser rulers were in charge of the subordinate towns and wore crowns made of white beads known as "sese ofun". The first organ of government in Oyo empire was the king known as Alaafin of Oyo. The Alaafin Administration: Oyo Empire was very unique and exceptional in its system of government. The Alaafin was assisted in his administration by a retinue of officials made up of priests, officials and eunuchs. The Ogboni Cult's Administration: apart from the Alaafin cabinet, members of the Oyomesi cult constituted another arm of government. It was a very powerful cult. The Army: it was another arm of government in traditional Yoruba society. It was very organized. The army was credited with performing important functions which included stability of the empire, expansion as well as keeping dissident territories in check. Historical background of Pre-Colonial political system in Igbo land: the Igbo people are best known for their segmentary or acephalous way of life. The Igbo people are grouped into five sub-cultures namely: The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria, The Igbo of North-Eastern Nigeria, The Western Igbo and The Northern Igbo.

One of the most popular versions of the migratory stories of origin of the Igbo people is the one that points to Israel. This assumption is based on the so-called similarities between the cultures of the Igbo and the ancient Hebrew. Some Igbo scholars consider themselves as off-shots of the lost tribes of the Hebrews who migrated southward. The political structure of the Pre-Colonial Igbo land: in this Igbo traditional society, there was no highly centralized authority but instead they had what could be called a diffusion of authority into different groups. The family was the smallest political unit in Igbo traditional society. Each family was headed by an "Ofo" title holder. The family sees itself as having one common ancestor. This principle is also present in the minimal lineage. Age grade was organized on a village basis. The association or age grade grew from childhood and took a common name to commemorate an event associated with the time of their birth. Oha-na-eze was a form of general assembly in traditional Igbo society. All the male adult members usually met in this assembly to perform legislative functions. The Igbo has great respect for the deities and the departed ancestors. The chief priests were the link between the people and the deities, as well as the departed ancestors. The Igbo believe in re-incarnation. Profaning of deities was a very serious offence among the Igbos. The religious lives of the Igbos were surrounded by mysticisms and superstitions. Historical background of Pre-Colonial political system in Hausa land: Hausa is located in Northern Nigeria. Hausa land, before 1804 was made up of fourteen states, and they were of two distinct groups. The first group consist of seven states called "Hausa Bakwai" states, that is, Hausa legitimate states. The second group consist of the remaining seven states and were known as "Hausa banza" states, that is Hausa illegitimate

states. The Hausa “bakwai” states are Daura, Biram, Zaria, Katsina, Kano, Rano, and Gobir while the Hausa “Banza” states are Nupe, Gwari, Yauri, Bauchi, Zamfara, Kebbi, Yoruba.

Political structure of the pre-colonial Hausa land: 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 the land,” was the full title given to any effective and efficient head of Hausa state. Emirate system of government among the Hausa people: Islam was introduced to Hausa land in the fourteenth century, and by the fifteenth century it was accepted as the religion of the ruling class. The Emir was an absolute monarch in his emirate, he was the political, administrative and spiritual leader. He administered his emirate in accordance with the provisions of Islamic and sharia law. The Emir controlled economic activities within his emirates. He maintained law and order in his domain. Colonial Administration and Indirect Rule System in Nigeria Historical Background: The British who have often been credited with the creation of Nigeria were not the first Europeans to land in Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to land in Nigeria through Bini Kingdom.

The Birth of Nigeria as a Geo-Political Entity: before the year 1990, all the different parts of Nigeria conquered by the British were still under their original administration. But by 1990, the whole Nigeria was under the responsibility of the British Colonial Office. The second amalgamation was that of 1914. In January 1914, the British government amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria. The principal reason for this is the same as that of may 1906. The Northern protectorate was not as economically buoyant as the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. That was why, for the British imperial offices, since the Southern trade was booming, amalgamation would allow the surpluses acquired in the south. The British officers defined the framework of the policies to be adopted and left the implementation to the local personnel or the rules.