

NAME: UYEH OGHAE EMMANUELLA DEPT: MBBS

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COURSE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF NIGERIA

QUESTION: WRITE A THREE PAGE REVIEW ON CHAPTER TWO OF THE SALIENT ISSUES in GOVERNMENT AND NIGERIA'S POLITICS BY TEMIDAYO DAVID OLADIPO AND IDOWU OLUSEYI OLALEYE: "AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE NIGERIAN STATE", PAGES 15-32

INTRODUCTION

The country Nigeria is situated in the West part of the African continent. It is bordered to the south by the Bights of Benin and Biafra, which are the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. On the West, it is bordered by Benin, on the North, by Niger, and on the East, by Cameroon. In its extreme northeastern corner, Lake Chad separates the country from the country of Chad. Nigeria stretches roughly 700 miles from west to east and 650 miles from north to south, covering an area between 3 degrees and 15 degrees East Longitude and between 4 degrees and 14 degrees North Latitude. It is the most populous country in Africa. It has a large range of diversities ranging from geography to climate, and from languages to ethnic groups. There are about 500 different ethnic groups and current use of about hundred languages including Tiv, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, Ibibio and English. This is the current status of Nigeria after its independence in 1960. This paper will focus on Nigeria before she was independent and a republic, meaning the historical analysis of the country before 1960. That period is divided into the Pre-Colonial period and the Colonial Era. The Nigerian State is a colonial creation. It is a product of the historical arrangement that arose out of European adventure with its eventual culmination in the colonization of Africa. Prior to its emergence as a state it was comprised of different independent chiefdoms, states, kingdoms and empires for example the Borno Empire, the Hausa states, and the Sokoto Caliphate in the North; the Igbo segmentary societies in the East; Benin kingdom and the Oyo Empire in the West and several ethnic identities in the Benue Valley. The country of Nigeria has always been diverse but what this review seeks to discuss is the evolution of the Nigerian State. Here, we will be using the book chapter as a guide and explain the evolution in three sections namely Life of The Early Man in Nigeria, The Pre-Colonial Administration of the regions and the Establishments of the Colonial Administration merged with the introduction of the Indirect-Rule System and the Amalgamation of the Regions.

LIFE OF THE EARLY MAN IN NIGERIA

The exact time when man started to live in the Nigerian region is unknown but the discoveries of ancient artifacts and tools have been able to give us an idea of how long ago man has lived there. Such as the excavation of a stone Age skeleton at Iwo Eleru near Akure in Ondo state which has thrown light on the sort of occupations involved in at the time Archeologists have said that man has lived in Nigeria since the Palaeolithic period dated from 500,000-9000BC and also that Nigerians took place in the stone-age period. The stone-age has three period divisions namely the early Stone Age 3,000,000-35,000BC, the Middle Age 35,000-15,000BC and the Late Stone Age, 15,000-5,000BC. The book chapter also includes the achievements of the early man such as skills learned for adaptation and survival such as the hunting of animals and gathering of fruits for food and the invention of tools used in the process of hunting and cooking.

Also the excavation of tools which marked the movement of man from the periods in the stone age such as Oldowan-type tools (consisting of pebbles made into chopping and cutting tools) discovered in Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania which marked the Early part amongst others, similar tools found in St Acheul in Northern Nigeria which were refined in the Middle stone age and Late stone age etc. tools for hunting were found in Jos, Plateau state and in Iwo Eleru in Ondo state. The early man also made a heavy chopper. This artifact was found at the Sokoto River in Sokoto state and at Sangoan Bay on the shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda, East Africa which gave it the name Sangoan. There is also evidence of more advanced tools in the stone and bronze-age such as sculptures of human heads and figures made out of terracotta (burnt clay) and with a distinctive artistic style. There are more discoveries mentioned in the book from this period. We now move on to the centers where these excavations took place in Nigeria. They consist of the Nok Culture (the place for discoveries of the terracotta heads, a transitional civilization from the stone age and the iron age in Nigeria, through the use of carbon dating it was said to have existed between the 5th and 2nd century BC), Benin civilization (known for its artwork especially for the mask used as the symbol FESTAC in 1977), Ife civilization (very similar to that of the Nok culture i.e. the terracotta heads, it is said that Ife learnt from Benin), Igbo Ukwu civilization (excavation by Thurstan Shaw the archeologist, discovery of three sites, which have been dated to the 19th century AD).

PRE-COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE REGIONS

This section examines the administration of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria namely the Yoruba, the Igbo, and the Hausa tribes. The Yorubas are one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria and are united by language. They have oral traditions of their migratory/ origin story. An author named Johnson in his book History of the Yoruba (1950) traced the origins to the North-Eastern area of Africa, basically Egypt and then settled in Ife in Nigeria. Oduduwa is also believed to be the head of the Yorubas as Ile-Ife is said to be the ancestral home of the Yoruba people. There is also the Oke-Oramfe's version of the origin of the Yoruba people which is the popular version. The political structure of these people were highly organized and structured. It had the Alaafin (king), the retinue officials known as the Oyomesi headed by the Bashorun who had the powers of a prime minister. The Oyomesi also acted as king makers and institutionalized checks and balances on the Alaafin's autonomous powers, the Ogboni cult who acted as the checks on the Oyomesi and solved disputes between both branches it also had the army headed by the Are-Ona-Kankafo, with very important functions such as stability. The kingdoms were also similar in nature with a capital town, subordinate towns, villages and farmlands with their respective rulers of lesser rank. The Igbo people practiced a more decentralized and a direct democracy system. They are highly known for their acephalous way of life. They had no Alaafin or specific centers of powers but rather socio-political institutions carry out legislative, judicial, executive, administrative, military functions. These institutions include the family, the age grades, the council of elders, and secret societies with titles such as Ofo title holder, Ozo title holder, the Okpara, the Oha-ne-eze etc. Seniority was of great social importance to the Igbo people. The Hausa people also worked with a retinue of officials in a well-organized court. Its origin is also attributed to an oral tradition about the making of the fourteen states of the tribe. These states are called Hausa Bakawi (that is legitimate Hausa States) and Hausa Banza (that is illegitimate Hausa states). The Hausa people were originally headed by the Sarkin Kasar who was the spiritual and political. The system changed with the

introduction of Islam in the Jihad by Ustman Dan Fodio in 1804. It came and conquered the original leaders and introduced an Emirate system with the use of Emirs and a Caliphate. It also had a host of officials which helped the emirs in his powers. Its judicial system was based on the Sharia courts in line with its acceptance of Islam. Islam basically shaped the remainder of the Hausa history down to its current status.

COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

Unlike the popular opinion of the British being the first to make contact with Nigeria it was actually first in trade with the Portuguese, in the 15th century even if it was the shameful slave trade. The Atlantic slave trade was the trade which carried on across the Atlantic Ocean between Europe and Nigeria. The demand for slaves started with the introduction of plantation system of agriculture in places like Brazil, Jamaica, and Haiti among others. 700-800 slaves were exported annually to Portugal but this trade was abolished by the British in the early decade of the 19th century through operations of the British West African Naval Squadron. But this was just another way for the Europeans to get deeply involved with the affairs of Africa and they succeeded. The eventual struggle for African states (The Scramble for Africa) among European powers led to the partitioning of African states in the 19th century. Here nations were allowed to pick states for colonies in which they had vested interest in. It was here the British Government picked Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia and Sierra-Leone in West Africa. It was the quest for the need to want complete control and make Nigeria into a colonial state that introduced the indirect system of government. This is a system of Britain ruling her colonies through local traditional rulers. Here the British would define the framework of the policies to be adopted and would leave the implementation of these to the local personnel or rulers. This took place around the year 1900. It was also under this administration that the birthing of Nigeria as a geo-political entity took place in the process of amalgamation. Nigeria witnessed two sets of amalgamations. The first one was the amalgamation of The Lagos Colony with the Southern Protectorate in May 1906. Tamuno (1980) observes that the primary aim for the 1906 amalgamation was purely economic reasons such as the economic progress of the southern part and the fiscal weakness of the Lagos colony. It was also done without the consultation with Nigerians. The second amalgamation and the most known is that of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in January 1914. This was done by Sir Frederick Lugard.